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WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D., F.L.S.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. VI.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., BERNERS STREET
1885.

G Anderson Miller

SERMONS AND LECTURES

SELECTED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS

OF THE LATE

JAMES HAMILTON, D.D., F.L.S.

LONDON:
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1885.

NOTE.

From a great number of Manuscripts the Sermons which constitute this volume have been selected with the view of presenting to the reader fair specimens of the Author's ministry, at once in the uniformity of its leading aim, and the characteristic variety and freedom of its means and methods.

This volume completes the *Uniform Edition of the Works of the late Dr. Hamilton.* The whole series is now presented to the Christian public as a memorial of one whom to know was to love and honour, with the earnest prayer that by the printed page the dead may yet not only speak anew with power to those who once enjoyed his ministry, but also convey comfort, instruction, and reproof to many whom his living voice never reached.

London, *June* 1873.

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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

MERCIFULNESS.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."—MATT. v. 7.

BRETHREN,—"God is Love." So the Bible tells us; but it needs a new heart to credit the announcement. It is hard for depravity to believe in rectitude; and vice can scarcely realize such a thing as stainless purity. And even so; sin has made us miserable, and misery makes us suspicious and sullen. It is not easy for our dreary and disordered spirits to realize that God is good; it is a contradiction of our morose and bitter natures to believe in the Divine benignity. And before we can rise up to all the blessedness of this discovery, our dark souls need to be brightened and our cold hearts warmed with a beam from His own countenance. It needs that God give us something of His own lovingness before we see and feel that "God is Love."

Yet, God is Love. And just as he has told shortly if not fully regarding the orb of day, who tells us that the "Sun is Radiance"—as this, without detailing rays of light and heat and transformation, is the compendious statement of

what the sun is to us, so without entering into the detail of particular attributes, it is the brief epitome of the Divine perfections; "God is love." Many glories may mingle, but the predominant and eventual effect is one. There is a prevalency, a promise of love. And though no searching can find out the Almighty to perfection, he approaches nearest the Divine Essence, in whose idea of the great I AM the most of this attribute mingles. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.

So far as embodied matter goes, the universe once was void. On this planet no forest waved, no cataract roared, no volcano reared its fuming head, no ocean clapped its hands. Nay, there was a time when this planet did not exist; a time when our sun was not lighted, nor any world of our system launched. There was a time when no star twinkled in the abyss of space, and no seraph winged his flaming path through the vast empyrean. There was a time when sound was sleeping and light was still unborn. But even then this silent orbless immensity was full of a latent joy; for it was full of God. Shrouded in their own light inaccessible, filled with mutual delight and complacency, and exchanging communion high and sweet, the Father, Son, and Spirit rejoiced together, and the bosom of Godhead was an ocean of bright unfathomed blessedness. And so from eternity to eternity the Creator might have continued the silent hiding-place of His own power, the radiant retreat of His own sanctity, the glorious abyss of His own joyful all-sufficiency. Even then, God was love. And that love welled so deep and rose so high, that at last it overflowed. Creation is the brimming over of the Creator's

love, the emanations of that exuberant goodness which must needs relieve its excess of joy by making blessed beings to see and share it. Sons of God and spirits of lofty ken were the first product of that loving fiat—beings so exalted that the Divine image was largely reflected from them, and their holiness and capacious powers drew down the affection and delight of Him who made them. But the love which flowed forth to seraphim and cherubim was not mercy, it was complacency. And it was not till from love's fountain still o'erflowing some drops fell so little and remote—it was not till tiny worlds were framed, and on planets like our own specks of existence began to breathe and move—it was not till over beasts and all cattle, flying fowl and creeping things, the Creator's smile looked down—it was not till God saw the goodness, and lit up the happiness of such lowly things, that it was seen how little are the objects which infinite goodness can love. It was not seen, till worms and atoms got their share, "God's tender mercies are over all his works." But a transmission of kindness, a triumph of goodness was still wanting, to show in the light most astonishing, "God is love." The insect in the sunbeam is insignificant, but it is not vile. The linnet on the spray is little, but it is not loathsome. And it was not till on earth that strange and awful spectacle was seen—a sinner—and till over his turpitude and trembling guilt the Lord proclaimed "The Lord, The Lord God, *merciful* and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin,"—it was not till then that the uni-

verse could know the omnipotence of love Divine. But God is love, and from the bosom of Divinity bursting, that perfection now flows round the universe in a threefold stream. To all that is holy and God-like it is congeniality, and complacent affection—an image of the love with which the ever-blessed Three do love one another. To all that is innocent and good, however little, it is good-will and benignity. And to all that is redeemed, in itself however wicked and repulsive, it is pity and compassion, it is tender mercy. And, though it needs something of the new nature to credit it, something of God's own lovingness to take it in, the heavens publish it, the earth re-echoes it, and hell dare not contradict it, all the universe is one various anthem, proclaiming that God is love.

And, dear brethren, he who dwells in God will dwell in love. His soul will be replenished from the great love-fountain; and besides the adoring affection which goes up to the God and Father of his Lord Jesus, and the attachment and complacency which flow forth to his believing brethren and like-minded friends, there will be a large effusion of compassion and benevolence and kind-heartedness to the world at large, consideration for the meanest, and mercy for the most obscure.

It is on this last—this divine and blessed feature of character—that I have a few words to say. "Blessed are the merciful." And I need hardly explain that this does not mean the soft and easy natures which confound the distinctions of right and wrong, and which, perceiving no flagitiousness in vice, would suffer the evil-doer to pass

unpunished. Nor does it mean that mere humanity and kindliness, which are native to some spirits, and which find a pleasure in seeing all around them happy. But the mercifulness of the text is a principle and a grace. It is a principle,—for it is conscientious, and takes pains, and seeks to cultivate and increase itself. And it is a grace,—for it does not abide alone. Here it co-exists with rectitude on the one side, and purity on the other; and instead of being a mere natural impulse, it is fed from the love of God. It is a beatitude. It comes from the happy sense of forgiveness. It is the mercifulness of one who not only seeks to obtain mercy, but who has obtained it already. It is a shadow of God's mercifulness—that blessedness which brims over in benignity—that joy unspeakable which gushes forth in good-will and melting kindness.

1. Mercifulness is commiseration for suffering men. Though under the government of a God of love, this world is the abode of much suffering, because it has been and still is the theatre of much sin. And it is in this world of many griefs that God leaves His people for a time. He might have so arranged it that from the moment a man became a child of God he should be done with sights of misery and scenes of sorrow. The Church of Christ might have been a little heaven on earth, and the moment a man embraced the gospel he might have been admitted into a terrestrial paradise where sorrow and sighing are for ever fled away; or the gates of the actual heaven might have opened for him, and in sight of an envying neighbourhood the new convert might have been at once translated where there is no curse, and where

God the Lord wipes every tear from the eye. But the case is different. God calls a sinner to Himself. He makes him a Christian. He gives him a soft heart and tender feelings. And instead of snatching him away where these feelings can never be wounded, and that heart never wrung, he leaves him here for ten or twenty years to sojourn in a world of woe. But why does He leave him? Not to have his sensibilities tortured, and his feelings agonized. But God leaves the Christian here that he may be the channel of God's beneficence and the perpetuation of his Master's kindness. By leaving the poor always with us, and not only the poor, but the sick and the sorrowing, the depraved and the ignorant, and by making the disciple the salt of the earth, the light of the world, Jesus virtually says to each follower:—"It is a world of poverty, be you my almoner; it is a world of darkness, be you my torch-bearer; it is a mighty lazaretto—a world of disease and sickness, of agony and pain,—be you my ministering angel; it is a world of ignorance and depravity, be you my missionary." And, furnished with Joseph's corn, or the good Samaritan's wine and oil, or the widow's mites, or the yet poorer believer's cup of cold water, He sends the disciple forth to dispense all the comfort and happiness he can. And you who are disciples remember the Saviour's words: "Blessed are the merciful." Contribute your quota to the welfare of a disordered world—you that can contribute money; you that can contribute friendly offices and kind attentions; and you that have neither wealth nor labour to spend, contribute kind looks, kind feelings, and kind words.

2. Mercifulness is compassion for the souls of men. This sort of mercy is a surer test of piety. The blind man meets you in the street, and you are sorry to see him in a world so gay shut up in sable gloom. You are sorry to see him groping his precarious path with nothing but his little dog or his iron-shod staff to guide him. You are sorry to see him amidst such brightness and beauty an exile from it all, and surrounded with danger in the open day. The poor man lies down on your threshold, and his bare feet bleeding in the frost, his lank and riven garments, his wan and hunger-bitten features are a prompt appeal to your compassion; and to relieve him is to relieve yourself. And the sick man, when you enter his lowly chamber, and there meets you from that pillow a gaze of suppliant anguish; or, as you stand unperceived in the dusky corner you catch the heavy moan, and overhear the restless tossing of the racked and fevered frame, every groan is a petition, and every sigh is an arrow in your sympathies, and you would fain sit down beside the couch and mix the cordial, or foment the wound, and strive to cheat into repose and refreshful slumber the writhing pain. But souls sick, poor, and blind are all about us, and who heeds their case? To know the only true God, and Jesus whom He has sent, is everlasting life; but this is a knowledge which very few have gained. The god of this world hath blinded their minds, and the glorious gospel of Christ has never shone into them. They have never seen that beatific sight, a God of love; and sunless, hopeless, Christless, they are exploring their dark and dreary path through a joyless

world. To possess a righteousness, to have peace of conscience, to be endowed with wisdom from above, to enjoy free access to a throne of grace, to count the Saviour, the promises, and heaven your own—if this be riches, and the want of this be poverty, what a poor and hunger-stricken world is this! And if to carry about a conscience sprinkled with atoning blood—if to feel the frequent bounding of the lively hope and the strong stirrings of a holy energy—if serenity under suffering, and an athletic ardour for active service—if sweetness of temper and devoutness of disposition—if a holy alacrity for daily work and a high-hearted readiness for extraordinary sacrifice and self-denial—if an exemplary life and a spiritual mind be indications of moral health,—then how few are well, and what a city of the plague we live in! But the striking fact is this, that though all this spiritual blindness, poverty, and disease are so rife around us, few notice them, and few are affected by them. We bustle out and in, and though vice and depravity and sottish ignorance are elbowing us on every side, we are seldom struck and astonished at them. We behold the multitude, but oh how seldom are we moved with compassion for them! But blessed are the merciful. Blessed are those who have got eyes open to discern this misery, and ears to hear its cry. And blessed those whom the love of Christ and concern for souls together, move to some endeavour. Blessed those who having heard the moan of misery, unconscious and uncomplaining, but on this account all the more affecting, have run to its relief. Blessed those who seeing the ignorance of the courts and lanes around us,

have devoted their Sabbath or their week-day time to teach the young and instruct the older. Blessed they who hearing the inarticulate but bitter cry from lands of superstition and horrid cruelty, have sent over to help them; and still more blessed those who have gone. Blessed they who perceiving the squalor and the hideous maladies of outcast wickedness, attracted to the spots where, as in a hospital, the extreme cases of depraved humanity are heaped and huddled; who, hearing the sighing of the prisoner and the imprecation of the outlaw, have dived into cells of darkness and dens of ferocious guilt, "to save them that are doomed to die!" Blessed are they whose pity, like the Divine compassion, flows so low and seeks the lost. "Blessed are the merciful."

3. The merciful man is considerate of the comfort and feelings of others,—of their health and comfort. From want of forethought, or want of timely activity on their own part, people who are not cruel often perpetrate great cruelties. A lady orders a dress which must be ready to-morrow evening; but this can only be accomplished by some pale dressmaker sitting up all night. No matter—it would be flagrant to go to such a fashionable gathering without the most modish robe. It must be made, and rather than lose a customer this *modiste* agrees to make it. But how is it made? With silk and patent needles? With sighs and tears and broken health—and too often a broken heart. But you say it was extra work, and the milliner got extra pay. Alas! all London is at some seasons dressed in this extra work, but these poor workers seem never the richer of this extra pay. And no wonder.

To catch a cold for a shilling, to stitch out one's eyes for half-a-crown, to bring on a consumption for a sovereign, is bad remuneration, but it is all the sum which many a refined and gentle lady allows those drudges who minister to her love of fashion, or make up by extra efforts for her own want of forethought. Or a few friends sit up till far after midnight, talking or reading, or employed with their music, till the bell is rung, and the servant is bid, with the same breath, put out the candles and do something or other at six in the morning. Or a carriage is ordered at a certain hour on a winter's night, and at that punctual hour it comes, but the party is pleasant, and though the poor coachman is soaked in sleet, or his feet are freezing to the board, unless the value of the horses be an argument, how seldom is the health of their driver one? And in ways like this, which are constantly occurring, but which it is not easy to enumerate, do those who would not for the world inflict a wanton cruelty, entail on their dependants a large amount of unintentional suffering. And the merciful man considers his neighbour's feelings. In modern warfare there are some objects which it is thought cowardly to assail and barbarous to destroy. The commander who would bombard a public building or ply heated shot on a picture-gallery would be deemed a Goth, for destroying in a national quarrel the property of the world. And fine feeling, the relative affections, keen sensibilities,—it is shabby work attacking these. If very vulnerable, they are very sacred, and he who harms them does humanity a wrong, and declares himself a ruffian. But far from recklessly wounding them, the merciful will be

studiously tender of them, and will feel the pang in his own bosom, when he has unintentionally given pain to a susceptible spirit. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are they who can enter into another's case and make it their own. Blessed are they who, when obliged to refuse the poor man's petition, can accompany his slow steps all the way back to his disappointed dwelling, and instead of dismissing him with a curse or a growl, try to soften his distress by a little gift or a kindly word. Blessed are they who know what it is to writhe with anguish because they fear that some heedless word or undesigned allusion has wounded a sacred feeling. And blessed they whose thoughtful vigilance and sympathetic delicacy makes them the guardians and the comforters of acute and tender natures, a balm to those feelings which are over-exquisite, and a tonic to those which are too susceptible.

4. The merciful man is considerate of his neighbour's character. Perhaps there is no production of our world so rare and precious, and yet none which has so many enemies, or is so generally attacked, as character. Wit and spleen, dulness and envy, cold severity and fiery bigotry, alike assail it, and its history is best told in the words of the prophet (Joel i. 4): "That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten." The "palmer-worm," or grasshopper—some light and frisky personage—makes a snap at it, and his jest does a little damage; then comes a locust, a right earnest censor, with his trenchant mandibles, and makes some

severe incisions; then comes a regular enemy with venom in his bite, blasting what he does not swallow, and what the locust left this canker-worm devours; and to finish all, here comes a posthumous critic, carping and nibbling at any vestige of verdure, and what the canker-worm has left, this grub or caterpillar, this devourer of decayed vegetation, eats. Most of our great men, Luther, Knox, Cromwell, Milton, Jeremy Taylor, George Whitefield, have undergone this process, and betwixt the gibes and calumnies of contemporaries and the prejudice or hatred of ages succeeding, they have been represented as monsters or maniacs, firebrands or fools. And the process which has passed on the great and good of past times is apt to be repeated on ordinary men of our own generation. We are apt, in heedlessness or bitterness, to take up or even get up a prejudice against particular persons; their oddities, their opposition to our opinions, their successful rivalry in our own line of life, makes us severe or hostile censors, and too ready to believe and repeat what is spoken to their disadvantage. But nothing can be more alien to the spirit of the gospel. It is full of lenity and candour and kind constructions; it "hopes better things" of those of whom it has heard indifferent accounts, and by this very "hope" makes them better. Instead of waiting for men's halting, or exulting in their overthrow, it thinketh no evil, it rejoiceth not in iniquity, it hopeth all things; and whilst it insists on honesty, and discourages adulation, its whole tendency is to encourage benevolence and brotherly kindness; and instead of nibbling and gnawing at our neighbour's good name, instead of acting as the canker-

worms and caterpillars of character, it urges us to make our own good, and to hold our neighbour's sacred. It urges us to resemble God himself, who is the great Guardian of reputations, and the avenger of injured rectitude. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour."

5. The merciful man is merciful to his beast.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Not that almsgiving will purchase an acquittal at the judgment-day, not that a few acts of mercy to our fellow-men can atone for sins committed against God. But blessed are they whose hard and stony heart has been taken away. Blessed are they to whom God has given a heart of flesh. Blessed they who, as an indication of a new and benignant nature, who, amongst the other proofs that they are born from above, are full of kindness and compassion. Blessed are the merciful, for their merciful disposition is an indication of what they are, and an earnest of what awaits them. They have found mercy, and they shall obtain mercy.

"During a scarcity of corn in Egypt some hundred years ago, an old miser sat day by day on the steps of his granary, speculating on the sufferings of his fellow-citizens, and calculating how he could make the utmost usury out of God's bounty. At length there was no more corn elsewhere; famishing crowds surrounded his store-

house, and besought him as a charity to give them a little food for all their wealth. Gold was piled around him; the miser's soul was satisfied with the prospect of boundless riches. Slowly he unclosed his iron doors, but recoiled terror-stricken from his treasury. Heaven had sent the worm into his corn, and, instead of piles of yellow wheat, he gazed on festering masses of rottenness and corruption. Starving as the people were, they raised a shout of triumph at the manifest judgment, but Amin heard it not. He had perished in his hour of evil pride."[1] In ways like this God has often fulfilled His own threatening. "He that stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." Like the phantom which the baron received into his boat, during the midnight storm, but which proved the ghost of a former crime—

> "Lord William shrieked; the hands he felt
> Were cold and damp and dead;
> He held young Edmund in his arms—
> A heavier weight than lead"

—deeds of cruelty will roam about, and in some unpropitious moment will again accost the criminal, and cling to his conscience "a heavier weight than lead." Acts of arrogant oppression, bitter words and ruffian blows,—the homes which he has harried, the hearts which he has broken, the reputations which he has blasted,—if unforgiven, will reappear, and cleave, a fearful load, to the oppressor's soul. They will stifle his prayers, and stop him at that petition: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive

[1] Warburton's *Crescent and Cross*, i. 143.

our debtors," and they will be swift and clamorous witnesses against him at the bar of God. "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy."

But blessed are the merciful. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." If it be a soul, made merciful from evangelical motives,—a man who having received mercy loves to show it, and whose soul, overflowing with the peace of God, is bountiful and benignant, then we can hardly conceive a more blessed state of mind than the mercifulness so produced. There is a mechanical performance of good offices in which there is little zest or satisfaction; but that full-hearted kindness, that effluent and effusive goodness which the love of Christ constrains, and the Spirit of God supplies—there is an increase in its expenditure, and in its efforts and exertions a continual feast. Such mercifulness is blessedness. Repeated into habit and infused into the very temper of the soul, it comes out again in the face of the philanthropist, a cheerful serenity, and an obvious charity with all that God has made. And when sickness comes, and weakness and decay, there comes a secret strength. The pillow grows unaccountably soft, and the silent chamber surprisingly bright and happy. The reason is,—the Lord is there. The prayers have been

heard of many debtors to his kindness and friendly offices, and, better than angels, the Lord of angels comes and makes all his bed in his sickness.

But mercy is more than blessed, it is divine. God's mercy came down from heaven. In the Saviour's person it became incarnate. Christ's mission was an errand of mercy. Christ's history was an embodiment of mercy. Like the stateliest of all our floral wonders, which grows obscurely for many years, and then bursts into a rapid and lofty spire of blossom, and in that splendid effort dies, so the "tender plant," the "root out of a dry ground," rose in sudden glory, and from the first bud to the topmost floret, from Canaan to Calvary, it was all the same,—munificence, good-will, mercy from first to last; and in this expenditure of mercy, in this exuberant effort, Immanuel died. And the noblest life, the most Christ-like career, is that Christian philanthropist's, who, in the attempt to make the world better and his brethren happier, pours forth his soul and throws his life away.

SERMON II.

THE WORD OF CHRIST: ITS CHARACTERISTICS AS THE SAVIOUR'S BOOK, AND THE SINNER'S BOOK.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."—COL. III. 16.

THE sum and substance of Scripture is the Saviour of Sinners. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; and the person and work of Immanuel are the great burden of the Bible. It is a Revelation, but it does not reveal everything. It does not tell the whole story of the universe, nor does it publish all that some might like to know regarding the perfections and purposes of God. But though a limited Revelation, it is sufficient for human purposes. It tells all that a sinner need know in order to secure the remission of his sins and the renovation of his character, a place in God's favour now, and a home in God's Heaven hereafter. It tells how in the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to *redeem* them that were under the law, in order that such redeemed sinners might receive the adoption of sons. It tells how that to as many as *receive* Jesus, He

gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. And to those redeemed sinners, to those receivers of Jesus, it says, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

To Jesus as Mediator is intrusted all the will of God concerning sinners here on earth, and in Jesus as Immanuel are manifested all those perfections of God with which sinners have to do. And as the perfect revelation of Jesus Christ, the Bible is to us a sufficient revelation of God. There is no access to God which the guilty can desire, but Jesus gives it. There is no knowledge of God's will,—what He loves and hates, which the candid and wistful can entreat, but Jesus declares it. And there is no model of actual excellence, no specimen of goodness embodied, to which sanctified ambition can aspire, but that model—that specimen, Jesus *is*. And as revealing this Jesus in every light,—in His sin-abhorring sanctity, and sin-expiating sacrifice—the Beloved of God, and yet the Friend of sinners—the mighty God, and yet the sympathetic Man,—revealing this Saviour so abundantly, the Bible has omitted nothing which was needful in order that the sinner's peace might be solid, that his hope might be steadfast, and that his joy might be full.

As the law-magnifying and sin-atoning Saviour, as the God-manifesting and sin-expiating Mediator, Jesus is the

Alpha and Omega of Scripture,—the Name, the Person, who, to earnest inquirers and alert believers, makes that Book so precious, and whatever else they may find in it owes its excellence to its association with Immanuel —its proximity to Him. There may be many scattered truths throughout its pages, but they all gravitate towards the Truth as it is in Jesus. There may be many characters of solemn majesty or sweet endearment there, but like planets round their primary,—from Abel's and Enoch's distant twinkle, to Abraham's sphery grandeur and David's full-orbed splendour, to Paul and John and other morning luminaries lost in the glory which lit them, all borrow their brightness from the Sun of Righteousness. There may in this garden enclosed be many a Tree of stately growth, and many a flower of exquisite perfume, but no flower smells so sweet as Sharon's Rose, and no Tree stands so stately as the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden. And all through the dwelling there may flow an atmosphere of warm salubrity, an air of health and joy; but the reason is that there is no Book in the Bible where the Spirit of Jesus does not breathe,—no apartment against whose open lattice the Rose of Sharon does not grow—no ivory wardrobe which does not smell of aloes, myrrh, and cassia. And to regenerate souls it is this which makes the Bible dear. It is the Word of Christ, concerning Himself and from Himself; the Word of which He is the beginning and the ending,—the all in all.

The whole Bible is Christ-pervaded, and therefore God-revealing. But I need scarcely say that the manifestation is dimmest at the outset, and brightens as the

time moves on. Some of you have lived on the coast, and some in mountain glens. In both these places there are seasons when the atmosphere is changed to mist, and often so dense that you cannot see a stone's-cast before you. But through the dimness you saw a flitting shape,—you lost it, and now you see it again, and again it disappears. But from the neighbouring height you hear a voice all the nearer and clearer, because the darkness which shrouds the shape gives isolation and volume to the sound. The form, from what you saw of it, the veiled and hazy glimpse, was glorious and august; but, like all objects in a mist, colossal and somewhat cold. The voice is majestic, ethereal, full of assuring melody, publishing peace. But lo! a crevice in the gloom; it splits and sunders, and dissolves and leaves a perfect day. A breath of air or a burst of sunshine rends the cloud and reveals an instant landscape, and the foremost object in it, and the fairest, "the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The old Economy is the misty morning—a morning during which a landscape of glory stands all complete—the Sun is shining, the grass is green, the dew is sparkling, but all is completely covered by the frosty cloud. And, like the glimpses through the mist, the Saviour is seen in the types and shadows of the Law, occasional and obscure, for a moment now and then, and by some more distinctly than by others. And, like the voices through the gloom, in the Prophets and the Psalms the Saviour speaks, and the message is articulate and earnest, and there is a tone of comfort and kindness as well as many an announcement of mighty

import and thrilling amazement. But suddenly to those who sit in darkness a light springs up, and through the melting mist, the fleeing shadows, O sinner, behold beside you your Saviour, your Kinsman, and your God. In the Divine landscape the New Testament does not create, it only reveals. It does not make God gracious, but it shows Him gracious. It does not bring heaven to earth, but it shows it here. The Saviour who flitted before the patriarchs through the fog of the old dispensation, and who spake in time past to the fathers by the Prophets, articulate but unseen, is the same Saviour who, on the open heights of the Gospel, and in the abundant daylight of this New Testament, speaks to us. Still all along it is the same Jesus, and that Bible is from beginning to end all of it the Word of Christ.

The Bible is the Saviour's Book. It is a Book which but for the Saviour we should never have possessed. It is a Book which has come to our world through His mediation, like Himself, the Gift of God. And it is the Book which reveals the Saviour, which tells what He is, and tells us that He is ours. Whoever has got a Bible may have the Saviour also. So that if, in respect of its authorship and origin, the Bible be the Saviour's Book, in regard of its destination and object, it is no less truly the Sinner's Book. It is not a meditation, but a message, a message from God, my hearers, to you and to me. It announces not God's thoughts about the universe, but God's thoughts and intentions about ourselves. It is not a speculative Book, but one intensely practical—not a Book which we may treat as we do the other volumes in our

library, taking it down and reading it when we please, and then placing it on the shelf again, without any change in our creed or our conduct. It is a solemn Book to deal with; for, just as it bears Salvation in its bosom, so it carries Jehovah's seal and sanction on its brow; as it brings Salvation to our houses, so it carries back to God a report of that reception which we give to Himself and His beloved Son—Himself and His great salvation. And it is a Book entirely unique. If from it we cannot find how to be happy in God's favour now, and how to secure a blessed immortality by and by, there is no book, no being in the world from whom we can ascertain it. When the most learned of lawyers lay dying, he said, "I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, and my study is filled with books and manuscripts on various subjects, but in all these books and papers there is only one sentence on which I can now rest my soul, and it is one in the Sacred Scriptures,—'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'" And what Selden said to Usher will be the experience of many yet:—"You will want a book which contains not man's thoughts, but God's—not a book that may amuse you, but a book that can save you—not even a book which can instruct you, but a book on which you

can venture an eternity—not only a book which can give relief to your spirit, but redemption to your soul—not a meditation for the universe at large, but a message to you in particular—a book which contains salvation, and conveys it to you—one which shall at once be the Saviour's Book and the Sinner's."

Such a book we have, but alas! we don't sufficiently doat on it—we don't enough wonder at it. In what remains of this morning I would try to point out a few of those attributes which should endear to us Christ's Word, and in the evening would urge the exhortation, "Let it dwell in you richly." Having on a former occasion—two years ago—shown that the Bible possesses these qualities of a world's book—a revelation meant for man—that it is ample, yet portable, plain yet memorable, I would this day indicate briefly six other qualities which it possesses, and which make Christ's Word the "right Word" for us. It is—

1. Simple. 3. Saving. 5. Supporting.
2. Significant. 4. Sanctifying. 6. Suited to all.

1. Christ's Word is simple. It is all plain to him that understandeth. There have been many books which professed great things—some that promised to work wonders for man, and some that even professed to come from God, but they were abstruse and enigmatical. They showed how insecure they were by the mystery in which they veiled their meaning. But the Saviour, in His kindness and sincerity, has made His Word an easy and simple Book, so plain that it need perplex no one—so self-evident that it is ready for everybody's use. There are

some sorts of food very pleasant, but you have to break a shell before you can get at them, and there are other sorts very wholesome when properly prepared, but poison as you dig them from the ground. But bread is no mystery. There it is, and there it is ready for immediate use; and God's Word is "Bread," "Bread of sincerity and truth." You have only to read it and believe it, without any more ado, in order to get all the good of it. Some conveyances and aids to locomotion are intricate and hazardous. It needs skill and experience, and presence of mind, to propel and control them; but that oldest locomotive, that most ancient auxiliary of age and infirmity—a staff—there is nothing precarious nor perilous in it. The feeblest hand need not fear to grasp it, and the weakest intellect knows how to wield it. God's Word is "a rod and staff," and you have only to lay all your stress on it and it will bear you safely even through the vale of death. And some inscriptions are written in antiquated letters, in quaint and curious characters, or even in dead and obsolete tongues. But you never paint a finger-post with Saxon letters or German characters, but you draw them broad and square, so that he who runs may read it in his most familiar alphabet. And Christ's Word is not only the path but the finger-post, inscribed so broad and clear in the world's vernacular, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need make no mistake. The "Righteousness of God," the right to Heaven, faith in Jesus the road to Heaven, are blazoned so bright and emphatic on the Gospel's page, that whoever errs cannot say that the direction was so obscure or obsolete that he could not spell it out.

2. And yet though so simple there is no book so significant. Like Christ Himself in Christ's Word are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and those who dig into this hidden Treasure may rest assured that as the word of an Infinite Being there is an infinite fulness in it. Perhaps you have not found it in your own experience. You have found the Bible a dry and meagre book; if so, the fault is yours. It is told of the great Linnæus that he was sitting on the turf one day, and a friend beside him, who used to scoff at his enthusiasm for natural science. "I wonder what you get in it to fill up all your time?" And planting his open palm on the green sward, the philosopher answered: "Under that hand there is enough of the Creator's power and skill to fill up a creature's life;" and under his hand there were five or six sorts of flowers and as many insects, and one or two sorts of minerals. And so planting your finger on almost any page of Scripture you might safely say: "There is here enough of God, enough of His soul-expanding perfections, enough of grace and truth, enough of sanctifying principle and strong consolation, to requite the labour of a life-time." If you have the same affinity for the sayings of God as the immortal Swede had for the works of God, dwelling with microscopic wistfulness on its separate sentences, and comparing Scripture with Scripture, you will find no exhaustion of its riches, and no end of its perfection; and should you peruse it a hundred times it will be at the last perusal that you will be best able to exclaim with Luther: "I adore the plenitude of Scripture."

3. The Word of Christ is saving. There is a company

whom no man can number before the Throne; but ere they went to Heaven they were all brought to God. All of them who had reached the years of understanding were converted. From being ignorant of God they were brought to know Him, and from hating Him they were brought to love Him. But in every case where this happy change has been effected, it was owing to Christ's Word. Sometimes that word repeated or expanded in a sermon, sometimes that word diffused and diluted in a book, but very often that word read in the volume of Christ's own book; and whether it be the Bible in its totality, or some isolated saying which has brought about the marvellous result, every child of God is born again of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. It is Christ's Word received into the soul, and abiding there, which is the source and securing of its immortality.

4. Christ's Word is sanctifying. If you get to love and revere it so as to exalt it into a companion and counsellor it will tell on all your conduct. "When thou goest it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; and when thou wakest it shall talk with thee, for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light" (Prov. vi. 22). Like a lamp it will reveal what is wrong in your character and motives, your temper and spirit, and be the great help to self-examination; but better than a lamp, like a wise and loving friend it will show the excellence of holiness, and set you on the way to attaining it.

5. And sustaining. Daily work needs daily bread, and it is in the Bible-magazine that the bread of life is stored. And just as the man who wishes strength for labour would

deem it false economy to save his time and take no food, so theirs is foolish haste who think to struggle on from day to day without the Spirit's bread. It is through the Word and prayer that we receive into our souls the energy of God, and import into common toils and daily drudgery the freshness and the zest of heaven. And just as the daily task needs nutritious food, so faintness needs its cordial, and disease its medicine. To exhaustion and fatigue the Word is what the honey was to Jonathan—light to the eyes and litheness to the limbs—to languor and religious ennui its sharp sayings are a quickening and tonic, and to the heavy heart of grief and care its wine and milk are support and resuscitation, so that many may repeat it: "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should have perished in mine affliction." To temptation that word has ever been the ready antidote; and since the Captain of Salvation proved it, since He who might have vanquished the enemy by His intrinsic power preferred employing the armour of the Word, no tempted believer need doubt that the means most effectual for quenching the fiery darts of the Wicked One is the sword of the Spirit. And, as we have already seen, in the vale of death it is the believer's rod and staff. "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." "I am the Resurrection and the Life; whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." "Let not your heart be troubled; in my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Some written word like this bears up the pilgrim spirit till the welcoming smile and living voice of Jesus tell him that the vale is past.

6. Christ's Word is suited to all. If Luther adored the fulness of Scripture, we have as much reason to bless God for its variety and all-fittingness. It not only tells the most momentous truths, but tells them in many distinct and varied forms. And in so doing it meets the tastes and aptitudes of all mankind. You know how singular are the susceptibilities and the habitudes of different men One is electrified by poetry, another counts the words of which a poem is composed. One luxuriates in argument, another cannot follow the shortest train of reasoning. One has no eye for colour, and another no ear for music. The Goliath of English literature used to boast that were he studying in a room with the best paintings in the world, but their backs all turned to him, he would not turn their fronts. And the Queen of Continental genius lived many years on the Lake of Geneva without ever adverting to the Alps beyond, and the blue water below. And one of our modern poets travelled over Europe without noticing any of the noble buildings he met with by the way. And as this is a world of many minds and many conformations, a homogeneous Bible would not have answered it. A Bible all poetry, a Bible all history, a Bible all argument, a Bible all maxim and proverb, might have been a treat to a few, but it would have been tedious and tiresome to all besides. Had an angel written the

Bible, he would have been content to mark down in the fewest words and once for all whatever it was important to reveal; and had one man been employed to write it all, it would have all been tinctured by his peculiar style. But having employed in its compilation the pens of forty men, dispersed over fifteen hundred years, the all-wise Jehovah has constructed it—

A harp of many strings,
A quiver of many shafts,
A book for all mankind.

And the advantage of this variety is seen in the various passages which have arrested or enlightened different readers. A profane shopman crams into his pocket a leaf of a Bible, and reads the last words of Daniel: "Go thou thy way, till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days," and begins to think what his own lot will be when days are ended. A Göttingen Professor opens a big-printed Bible to see if he has eyesight enough to read it, and alights on the passage: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not," and in reading it the eyes of his understanding are enlightened. Cromwell's soldier opens his Bible to see how far the musket-ball has pierced, and finds it stopped at the verse: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart and the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." And in a frolic the Kentish soldier opens the Bible which his broken-hearted mother had sent him, and the first sentence that turns up is the text so familiar in

boyish days: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden," and the weary profligate repairs for rest to Jesus Christ.

And in the same way, if there be a thousand texts which the Holy Spirit has used for awakening concern about the great salvation, there are a hundred texts which He has used for guiding souls into the peace and joy of believing. "What words were those you read? What sounds were those I heard? Let me hear those words again," exclaimed the South Sea Islander, and the missionary read again, "God so loved the world"—"Can that be true? God love the world, when the world not love Him!" and the missionary read again, "God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son;" and as the tears burst fast and big down his swarthy cheek, the poor heathen hasted away to weep and wonder at the love of God. "The just shall live by faith." Like a nail in a sure place this saying sticks in Luther's memory. He wanders through the convent, he trudges it to Rome, he crawls up Pilate's Staircase, but still the sentence is sounding in his ear. Through seas of anguish and dismay he buffets his labouring path, no ray to guide him but this tiny spark, till all at once at that little spark Luther's soul is kindled, and the Reformation-beacon flames. There was a "stricken deer," a fine spirit, brilliant, kind, and lofty, but sensitive and sad, a wounded spirit. For many a day he had been goaded by the sense of sin, and had often opened the Bible for relief, but opened it in vain: "I flung myself into a chair near the window, and seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it

for comfort. The first verse I saw was Rom. iii. 25, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.' Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fulness and completeness of His justification. In a moment I believed, and received the gospel." That moment gave birth to the Olney Hymns, and to all the years of happiness which ever shone on the chequered path of William Cowper. "The thing that astonishes me in the Gospel is that *God is Love;*' so exclaimed a converted African. And the text which first filled with joy unspeakable the capacious soul of President Edwards, was: "Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen." "As I read these words there came into my soul and was diffused through it a sense of the glory of the Divine Being. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, How excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be if I might enjoy that God, and be wafted up to Him in heaven, and be, as it were, swallowed up in Him for evermore."

SERMON III.

THE WORD OF CHRIST: ITS TRUTHS AND ITS TONE.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."—COL. III. 16.

"THE Bible has been my guide in perplexity, and my comfort in trouble. It has roused me when declining, and animated me in languor. Other writings may be good, but they want certainty and force. The Bible carries its own credentials along with it, and proves spirit and life to the soul. In other writings I hear the words of a stranger or a servant. In the Bible I hear the language of my Father and my Friend. Other books contain only the picture of bread. The Bible presents me with real manna, and feeds me with the bread of life."

So wrote one whom I knew familiarly, and in whom the Word of Christ dwelt richly. You, my friends, have got the same Bible. Have you got the same good of it? Is it your comfort in trouble, your guide in perplexity? Is it full of certainty and force? Is it to you the language of a Father and friend? And is it your spirit's food? Is it real manna? Do you often get strength and

animation from it? Do you sometimes find it a feast and a reviving cordial?

The Word of Christ dwells in our houses. Every one here present has it in some form. One possesses it in large typography and lit up with splendid illustrations—a luxury for the eye to look upon. Another has it in all the varieties of ancient speech and modern, and finds it curious to compare the apt and forceful renderings of Wicklif, Erasmus, Luther, Coverdale, with the Hebrew and Greek originals. Another glories in possessing the identical copy on which some man of God was wont to study—the handbook, marked and lined, which accompanied him in many a pilgrimage, and witnessed many an hour of rapt communion; or the dear heirloom which, in days long faded and in scenes long quitted, was duly opened for the morning worship, and often gilded by the evening rays of summer Sabbaths, and which took its final station by the bedside of a sainted sire. Some of you have acquired it for yourselves in goodly print and tasteful binding, and others are content to turn the pages with which they have been long familiar, or which haply they conned at school. But, be its form and figure what it may, and what it may the mode of its acquiring, the possessor of a Bible is a favoured man. Into whatever house a copy of the Scriptures has come, there an offer of salvation has also come; and wherever the Word of Christ dwells, nothing but a willing and welcoming heart is wanting in order that Christ Himself should dwell.

But, my dear friends, it is not enough that the Bible

should dwell in our parlours and our pews. The sayings of that Bible must be hidden in our hearts. And when once its Truths inhabit our convictions, and its Tone is infused into our temper, and its Transformation inspires our life—when we are thus Biblical in creed, and affection, and conduct, when once that blessed Book which is now the inmate of our houses becomes the venerated guest and all-controlling president of our heart of hearts, we shall have fulfilled the exhortation, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

1. Let its Truths and Realities inhabit your convictions. And in order that they may inhabit, let them enter. Many turn towards the firmament of Scripture a telescope with the lid still on, and then see nothing wonderful. Many plunge into the Scriptural fountain an empty bottle with the cork still in, and marvel that, however long they leave it, they still bring it empty up. And many pray, "O send forth thy light and truth," but keep their minds so closed by worldliness or carelessness, or some obstinate prepossession, or some besetting sin, that the light and truth cannot enter. For instance: the door of some hearts is closed by carelessness. They take up the Bible, or they wander into a place of worship, and the most terrible or touching truths make no impression on them. To hear that the unbeliever is condemned already, to hear that except they repent they shall perish, to read or hear that hypocrites and all liars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth—realities so awful and so personal to themselves awaken no surprise or fear, for apathy and heedlessness have shut the door.

And the hearts of others are closed by some besetting sin. They see enough to perceive a beauty in religion, and a delightsomeness in the favour of God; and they are almost persuaded, till they remember that in becoming Christians they must cut off the right hand. They must give up the intoxicating glass. They must discontinue the Sunday trade or the illegal gains. They must abandon that sin which has so long been a sweet morsel under their tongue, and the flesh takes alarm, and bars the door with some sinful lust or passion. And the hearts of others are closed by an obstinate prepossession. They fancy that the Gospel is something else than a Saviour offered, and that faith is something else than a Saviour accepted. They are not content with the record that God hath given us his Son, and in his Son hath given us eternal life. They pray for what is proffered, and supplicate what they would be wiser to accept. Like a blind pauper into whose hovel a rich man comes, and lays a piece of money on his lap, but the blind pauper still stretches forth his hands, imploring, "Relieve me, or I perish; give me something, or I die," —though the Saviour and Salvation be God's great gift to sinners, many, blinded by prepossession, are praying for Christ as if He were still withheld, and for pardon, as if it were not freely offered. It would be a better prayer to pray that the eyes of their understanding may be opened, that they may *see* the things which are *freely given* them of God.

Turn towards the Word of God an open eye and an honest heart. Be desirous to find something; seek and

you shall find. In a work which a few days will bring to light, we find the greatest of Christian philosophers thus writing down the state of his religion on a given day: "I have a strong general desirousness toward God, though often suspended by the avocations of life, and daily overborne amid its manifold and besetting urgencies. And it is a desirousness not satisfied. Says the Saviour, 'He that drinketh the water which I will give him, shall never thirst.' I have not yet drunk that water. I long after God, but know not what it is to be filled with the fulness of God. And yet there is one distinct and definite direction which stands connected with the result of the 'soul delighting itself in fatness.' It is to hearken diligently unto God. It is to 'hear and our soul shall live.' This points to the way in which I ought to entertain God's Word. It is to charge myself with attention to it. It is to dwell on the import of its sayings, both as respects their meaning and their trueness. And for my encouragement I may remember the gleams of comfort which I have experienced on the entrance of such words as, 'The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;' 'In quietness and in confidence we shall have strength;' 'Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Give me, O Lord, to feel more and more the preciousness and the power of Thy Scriptures." That prayer was abundantly heard; and any one who, like this mighty thinker, longs to feel more the preciousness and power of God's Scripture, must, like him, bend over the written page an intenser and more expectant gaze, and implore the enlightening Spirit with a more resolute

and vehement cry. As there is no study more sublime, so there is none which you can prosecute with surer hope and more solid results. Should you find, at the outset, some sayings too hard, address yourself to such as are more obvious and easy. Should there be branches in this Tree of Knowledge above your present reach, gather such fruit as is more accessible; and, when refreshed and strengthened by those truths which you do attain, you will be better able to reach those which grow more loftily. And the more versant you are in the Scriptures themselves, the more vivid their particular statements stand forth to your view, the more of God will you find to be in them, till at last those perplexities and misgivings which haunt the crude beginner will surrender to the systematic largeness of your creed, and strong convictions of a firm and familiar faith.

Sitting in his tent-door, and on the watch for strangers, Abraham saw three approaching. He liked the look of them. There was something sacred and supernal in their movements and their mien, and Abraham's heart leaped up at the sight of them. "My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant." He detained them one by one, and deemed himself a happy man so long as they sate beneath the Tree, for a glory of God was around his guests. They were Heaven's pilgrims, and while they tarried Mamre was holy ground. And so with Bible truths. Sit you like Abraham, watchful, in your closet and in the sanctuary, looking out for Bible truths. Have a heart hospitable to whatever comes from God, and no fear but

glorious truths will come—truths whose arrival will blaze with light from heaven, and whose entrance into the homestead of your convictions will create a holiday: truths whose coming will make your life more happy, and your lot illustrious to yourself. The Truths of God will come, and God himself will come; and if you entertain them, they will not, like Abraham's angels, seek to pass away. Yes, my friends; the Bible abounds in stately and self-commending truths. The Sovereignty of God, the Substitution and Satisfaction of Immanuel, the Righteousness of Jehovah-Jesus, the Christ-revealing and soul-renewing work of the Holy Spirit, the Intercession of the Heavenly High Priest, the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, the necessity of Holiness, present salvation, the prevalency of Prayer,—to many men these truths merely exist as dogmas, dogmas which they have stowed away in the dusty chamber of their formal creed. But happy is the man to whom they come in their angelic garb, imperial in faith's purple, and radiant in emitted splendour, "trailing clouds of glory with them as they come." And happy is the man who, starting from the tent-door, bows before them, "Pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant," and constrains them to turn in. And happiest of all who, blessed with such God-like visitors, detains them as perpetual residents; and furnishing for them his intellect's most spacious chamber and his fancy's loftiest bower, and bidding all his love and faith and veneration wait on them and serve them, finds his being exalted into the home of high conviction, the palace of God's own Truth. In such a man the Word of Christ dwells richly.

2. Let its tone be infused into your temper. When a person speaks there is not only the thing he says, but the tone in which he says it. There is a dry and flippant tone which withers the sincerity out of the kindest words; and there is a full-hearted tone which will fill the most common words with a melting magic. And did it ever strike you that there is not only a Bible truth, but a Bible tone? not only Christ's *Word*, but Christ's way of speaking it? But how shall we find it out? Christ's voice is heard no longer. We can no longer note His aspect or His accents. But it does not matter. Both are recorded. "The Word dwelt among us full of grace and truth." The Word was Grace and Truth. What Jesus spoke was Truth, the way He spoke was gracious,—so gracious that all men marvelled hearing the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. Christ's tone was *gracious*. He spoke the *truth*, but He spoke the truth *in love*. God is Love, and the Son of God spoke lovingly. Praying to His Father, and speaking to His dear disciples, that love flowed in all its limpid brightness, and sweet was the joy which its pearly music made. Addressing the promiscuous throng, and opening His great commission on the Galilean mountain, that love took the form of a holy sincerity, and solemnly enchaining was the "authority" in which its earnestness poured along. Gazing over doomed Jerusalem that love gushed in tears, and tender was the compassion which sobbed the reluctant farewell. And even when moved with indignation at hypocrisy and hardness of heart, there was love enough to make His anger far more awful,—that absence

of bitterness when goodness frowns on guilt—the wrath of the Lamb. The key-note of Scripture is Love, and the truth of Jesus is all spoken in a divinely gracious tone.

My dear friends, I wish I could make it plain. There is something more than doctrine in the Word of Christ. A chemist may analyse the wine of Lebanon, and he may tell you that it contains so many salts and alkalies; and you may combine all these, you may mix them in the just proportions; but chemistry will never create what the vintage yielded. To make the wine of Lebanon needs Lebanon itself—the mountain with its gushing heart and aromatic springs. A theologian may analyse the Christian doctrine. He may tell you how many truths and tenets this Bible contains; and you may combine them all. You may put the sound words together and make a system of them, but that system, however orthodox, so long as it abides alone, is not the Word of Christ. It needs Christ's own mind, His loving heart and benignant spirit, to reproduce the truth as it is in Jesus. It needs the Evangelic truth and the Evangelic tone to go together. They are essential to one another, and it is a Gospel only when they are combined. It is only when the "sayings of the book" and the "spirit" of its Author are blended in one that we have the very Word of Christ,—that word which He would recognise as His own, and in which those who know Him would see Him alive again.

You know how much I value forms of sound words and systems of Theology, but I shall never confound any system of Truth or synopsis of Scripture with Christ's own word. That paper full of acid may contain the

essence of the apple, but no one will accept a dry powder in lieu of the sleek and fragrant fruit which he has often gathered among the "trees of the wood." Those other papers and phials may contain all that is essential to the juice of the grape, but no one recognises in them the smell of Lebanon or Carmel. And that dry abstract of Theology may contain the clarified essence, the crystallized Evaporation of Bible truth; but in this shape it is no more the Truth as it is in Jesus than malic acid is the apple on the Tree, or Tartar and potash are the fruit of the Vine. The true solvent of Christ's doctrine is Christ's spirit; and there you have Christ's Word where you have Christ's meaning—the Saviour's speech filled with the Saviour's spirit, holy truth uttered in a heavenly tone.

In Christ's Word there is both Christ's doctrine and Christ's heart,—the fact which He announces, and the feeling with which He proclaims it,—or, as we have called it, the Saviour's truth and the Saviour's tone; and in order to be really Biblical, in order to be completely Christian, we must unite the two. If a man wants either, just to that extent Christ's Word does not dwell in him. If he holds the sayings of Jesus, but has not the spirit of Christ, that is, if he holds fast the sound words, but does not hold them in Jesus' love, the dry theology may dwell in him, but without the quickening Spirit the mere theology is not the Word of Christ. Or if on the other hand he has the spirit of Christ, and you can see it in his holy life and his love to God, in his devoutness and heavenly-mindedness, but at the same time he is grossly erroneous on momentous truths,—Christ's spirit may dwell

in him; but without the revealed truth the holiest disposition is not the Word of Christ. In either case the mind that is in the man is not the same mind which was in Christ Jesus. In the one case it is not the same doctrine, in the other it is not the same disposition. The one is heterodox, the other heteropneumatic. Fénélon. Flippant Calvinist.

And just as the heart of Jesus is the true vehicle and proper home of the Truth as it is in Jesus, just as Christ's spirit is the only perfect solvent of Christ's doctrine, so I may now remark that the Saviour's tone is often the safest clue to the Saviour's meaning—the surest interpreter of the Saviour's words. And if we wish to enter into the meaning of what He says, if we would not distort nor misinterpret it, we should try to catch not only the announcement which He makes, but the aspect with which He speaks it, and the accents in which it flows. A witness in a Court of Justice tells you that a person now departed said so-and-so. But you are not content with a memorandum of his words. You must know his mien, his look, his tone. Did he say this angrily or mildly, in sadness or with a smile? I am told, for example, that the doctrine of Predestination is in the Bible. But how is it there? Is it erected as a bar to the Fountain Opened? Is it proclaimed in awfulness and anger, to tell that Gospel blessings and Gospel invitations are of little use, for God's decree has narrowed them to a scanty number? Thus have I heard it put, but I ask again not only, What is written? but, How is it written? As it stands in the Bible, how does it look?—grim or

gracious?—benignant or forbidding? How does it sound?—severe or sweet?—harmonious or harsh? I ask not only what is its tenor? but its tone? And turning to one of its stronghold passages (Eph. i. 3-12) I read. And without noticing how it is qualified and tempered by the object of it all, "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," I only beg you to observe its tone. Observe how ecstatic and exulting the whole passage is, beginning and ending with hallelujahs, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus," and steeped in joy and love from end to end. When viewed from the Evangelic standpoint, observe what a bland and benignant doctrine this Election is, hindering no man's salvation who is willing to be saved, and giving glorious security for their salvation who have once found acceptance in the Beloved. And when thus caught in the apostolic tone, see how readily it runs, not into a dark river of doubts and fears, but into the sunny raptures of the Evangelic hymn:

"When languor and disease invade
This trembling house of clay,
'Tis sweet to look beyond our cage,
And long to soar away.

Sweet to look back and see my name
In life's fair book set down;
Sweet to look forward and behold
Eternal joys my own.

Sweet on His faithfulness to rest
Whose love can never end;
Sweet on His covenant of grace
For all things to depend.

Sweet in the confidence of faith
To trust His firm decrees;
Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His."

And, just to give one illustration more—the Saviour's tone, the interpreter of the Saviour's mind—how often have I seen those precious chapters, the 9th and 11th of Romans, blackened and begrimed, till that gracious Sovereignty which they describe began to wear a look of grim severity, and the God of the Gospel was made as stern and sombre as the Fate of old mythology! Well, one day last week I took up two volumes. One contained some of Dr. Chalmers's private memoranda, and after reading a noble exposition of these chapters by Dr. Williams, the Christian philosopher remarks :—"I want to feel my own nothingness. I want to give myself up in absolute resignation to God, to lie prostrate and passive at His feet, with no other disposition in my heart than that of merging my will into His will, and no other language in my mouth than that of prayer for the perfecting of His strength in my weakness. I think that Williams's views are fitted to encourage one in God; in particular to proceed on the plain calls and assurances of Scripture. Williams puts Calvinism on a more practical footing than most of its expounders do, and I desire from the abyss of my own nothingness and vileness to cry unto God that He might cause me to do as I ought, and to be as I ought." Such were the reflections of the great divine, looking at the doctrine not darkened by man's foolishness, but lambent in the light of God. And the same day that we read these remarks we read a specimen of how the doctrine works when thus discerned, its effect when viewed not through the smoked glass of preconception, but viewed in the limpid and loving

atmosphere of Scripture, and viewed not by a mighty theologian, but by a toil-worn dressmaker, one who once hated the Bible, so that she hid what copies she could find, and would leave the room when she saw people reading it, but who spent much of her after-life in reading it to prisoners and workhouse paupers. For a long time after becoming thoughtful she was unhappy. She thought she must form the life of God in her own soul, till she read the 9th and 11th of Romans. "There seeing salvation, not in its commencement only, but from first to last, to be entirely of grace, I was made free! and looking upon a once crucified but now glorified Saviour, with no more power of my own than the praying thief had upon the Cross, I also found peace. The declaration of the Lord, 'It is finished,' was enough, and I was graciously given to understand that contrition, love, and holiness are the fruits of the Spirit, produced in a believer when 'looking unto Jesus.' I read the chapters referred to much. One memorable day the words: 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy,' were as heavenly music to my heart; for whilst experience had shown my utter destitution before God, I rejoiced to see my eternal salvation secure on the ground of God's free and sovereign mercy. The high assurance that Christ was mine, and with Him 'all things,' has never been withdrawn." [1]

[1] *Sarah Martin*, p. 7. Religious Tract Society.

SERMON IV.

THE WORD OF CHRIST: ITS TRUTHS AND TRANSFORMATION.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."—COL. III. 16.

THE Bible is Christ's Word. Part of it was spoken by His living lips. All of it was dictated by His Spirit. Directly or indirectly, it all bears on Himself—His mighty enterprise, His person Human and Divine, His threefold offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. The Bible is God's gift, but He gives it through the hands of the Mediator. And this clothes it with a gracious character. This makes it wear an aspect benign and propitious. It is the Saviour's Book—filled with the Saviour's Spirit, and wearing towards our world the Saviour's look, full of grace and truth. Having last Sabbath morning considered some of the attributes of the Bible, its simplicity and significance, its efficacy to save and sanctify and sustain the soul, and its universal adaptation, its suitableness to all mankind, in the evening we enforced the exhortation, "Let it dwell in you richly," let its Truths inhabit your convictions, and let its Tone be transferred into your temper.

The leading Truths of the Bible we must not at present stop to enumerate. But I may remark that the Truths most prominent are the Truths which we are usually the last to notice, and the Truths most personal are usually those with which we are least impressed. We believe its account of Abraham, and Moses, and David, but do not so vividly believe its account of ourselves. The Bible account of each person here present—speaking of him as he came into the world, and as he now is or lately was—is as personal as if the name of each were filled in. That statement is, "By one man's disobedience we were all made sinners, and there is none of us righteous, no, not one. We are dead in trespasses and sins, and are by nature the children of wrath. Death is the wages of our sin, and judgment hath already passed upon all men, so that all are already condemned." But few realize in its meaning, or credit in its literal force, God's account of themselves. Few have been penetrated with the conviction that they are naturally the children of wrath, without holiness, without hope, without strength, without God. There are few into whose minds the conviction of their personal ruin and wretchedness has burst with all its terrible distinctness, and who have been forced to exclaim in the anguish of that self-discovery, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But broadly as it asserts the ruin that is in ourselves, as broadly does it announce, and far more brilliantly does it display, the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It tells that the Word was made flesh. It tells that the Son of God became a High Priest, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. It tells that He offered

up Himself a sacrifice of a sweet savour unto God, and that now He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. It tells that God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; and that "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." And to the question, How shall a sinner benefit by this vicarious obedience, this Surety-righteousness, this Redemption that is in Christ? to that most personal and urgent question it answers, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ." Or, to sum it all in the two sentences which we lately expounded, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And yet there are few who believe these announcements in the same full and simple way in which they believe the story of Joseph, or Ruth, or Daniel, or any Bible incident which has no immediate bearing on themselves. How few they be who are joyfully content with what Jesus Christ has done, and whose souls are in faith and fearlessness reposing on His finished work! How rare to meet with one who, looking at his sins in all their blackness, looks beyond them to the sin-atoning blood, and from the depths

of his own pollution cries, "Worthy is the Lamb!" And how seldom do we hear that new song from souls who have found in God the Judge, God their Saviour, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

Now, my dear friends, it is of infinite moment that these Bible truths should dwell in you. To have clear conceptions, and secure possession of them, is faith, and he is a believer whose mind these truths occupy and inhabit. But I fear that the best which can be said of many Gospel hearers is that they get a view of the Word, or a visit. It is not a guest nor an inmate. Just as you may sit at the window and see passengers on the street or the public road, and make remarks on them, but none of them are any friends of yours, so you do not detain them, you do not run down and open the door and invite them in. So, many see a truth pass by, and they pronounce a verdict on it, but they do not take it home. They don't open their heart's door and invite it in. And others are greatly taken with some truth. They hear a sermon which sets the Saviour's work in a most engaging light, or which makes the way of Salvation the simplest thing they ever saw, and in the delight of the moment they arrest that doctrine, and detain it, and declare that it must abide with them for ever. But their admiration soon abates. They go out and in on their worldly errands, and neglect their illustrious Visitor. Or they

bring home low and sordid company, gross and earthly schemes, fierce passions, sinful fancies, silly talk, worthless books, and, like an angel away from home, the slighted Truth takes wing, and leaves their sordid spirits desolate as ever. But never rest till Christ's Word dwells in you. Like Abraham in the tent-door, look out for it. Hail it when it comes. Constrain it to abide. Entertain it with your best. Enthrone it in your highest heart, and bid all your being wait on it and obey it. Banish whatever by its grossness, or meanness, or wickedness might offend a celestial inmate. And pray that the Holy Spirit would purify your soul into a Temple of God's Truth. And if this you do with what you read and hear, instead of turning aside to tarry for a night, as is the case with the convictions of many, Christ's Word will dwell in you richly and will abide with you for ever.

2. But it is not enough that Christ's Truths inhabit your convictions. As we saw last Sabbath evening, the Bible has not only a predominant Truth but a pervading Tone; and in order to be thoroughly Biblical you must not only ascertain that truth, but you must catch that tone; and in those only does Christ's Word dwell richly in whom Christ's Spirit dwells as well as Christ's Sayings. There is a great difference betwixt a flower-border and a hortus siccus. Gummed down on sheets of paper, the botanist has a sample of almost every plant that grows; but, dry and stiff and dead, it is only *his* practised eye which recognises in such mummies "the flowers that paint the field." They have all the characters which science craves in order to fix their family and species, their nature and

their name, but they utterly want the fragrance which used to float around them, and that freshness of colour which dazzled the delighted eye. They lack the joy of summer and the breath of June. And there is a great difference between the chemist's laboratory and the world as its Creator has made it. Stored up in curious compactness, but also in dull disguise, that chemist has the essence of all Nature on his shelf; but in his simple substances, his labelled phials and dusky powders, who would recognise the coral grotto and the sparry cave, the gushing vineyard or the bending corn? or from those flasks of seeming emptiness who could picture to himself the Ocean's billowy swell or the Ether's boundless blue? The botanist's dried samples are Flora's Dictionary, the chemist's powders and gases and metals are Nature's A B C. They are portable knowledge, stereotyped facts, a standard of constant reference and easy comparison, the simplest arrangement of manifold and miscellaneous phenomena. But were your information confined to the museum or the laboratory you would have little idea of this bright and abounding world. Dried specimens and simple substances could give you faint notion of Alpine pinnacles and smoking cataracts, surging forests and sparkling rills—this globe of ultramarine, with its islands of green and gold—this earth, with its million shapes and its million hues, and that zone of fragrance and freshness which laps it all around.

And so with Bible truths. It is perfectly possible, and for some purposes eminently important, to cull out from the Bible and arrange and classify its several Truths.

And to possess a portable orthodoxy, a prompt and easy standard of reference, it is good to index these Truths and arrange them in Catechisms and Theological compends. And to sneer at such summaries and systems of Scriptural doctrine, because they are cut and dry, is as silly as it would be in some sentimental tourist or lackadaisical rhymer to scoff at the herbalist for gathering simples or the naturalist for storing science in scenes where he only seeks for sights and sounds and new ideas. But whilst in the spiritual world systems and doctrinal specimens subserve the purpose of a Materia Medica or a doctrinal museum, whilst they are good as tests and correctives on the one hand, or good for classification and clearness of thought, and give the man acquainted with them a twofold advantage, as when the man of taste is also a man of information, the soundest doctrine is no more the Bible than carbon is the diamond, and the noblest system of Theology is no more the Word of Christ than yon vast museum is that smiling World which its Creator greeted "Very good." But just as the man of science, if he be also a man of sensibility, will walk forth from his cabinet or laboratory, and in a moment gaze on forms and hues, and listen to sounds and melodies, and lose himself in a glory and life-gladness of which he had no sample in his microcosm, so the theologian, if he be a devout and spiritually-minded man, on issuing from the cell of gas-lit orthodoxy on the fields of sun-gilt Revelation, viewing its free and multitudinous forms, and listing its clear and cheerful tones, and breathing its soft and balmy atmosphere, must feel that Bible doctrine is loveliest in Bible

language, and that after all it is only Heaven's Truth when spoken in a heavenly tone.

And therefore do I repeat to you, dear brethren, let the Bible itself dwell in you—Christ's own Word in Christ's own tone—the truth as it was in Jesus—truth dissolved in love, and redolent of sanctity. Truth, as it rings from our pulpits, often sounds severe and snell, but each salvation truth as the Saviour spoke it fell cordial and benign. Truth, as it reads in our books, often reads cold and wintry, and many is the frost-bitten heart which a cold theology has numbed "past feeling;" but truth, as it flowed from Immanuel's lips, thaws the spirit, and in the heart which hides it and muses on it, the fire begins to burn. The truth of God's sovereignty, as men have often viewed it, is a dark thunder-cloud fraught with muttering wrath; as Jesus viewed it, that truth was a sunny lattice in His gloomy sky, and He rejoiced in spirit, and thanked Thee, O Father, for it. The truth of Predestination, as men have often put it, is a bar to the Fountain opened, and makes access doubly difficult; as the Saviour put it, that truth was a palisade around the sheep-fold, a bar which shut nothing out except the roaring lion, and only made it sure that none would perish who were once within. The truth of personal Election, as men have often recited it, is a mournful dirge, the elegy of Hope and the requiem of effort; but that truth in the two passages where it is expressed most emphatic soars up into a stately doxology, and nothing can show more, that as "a truth in Jesus" this doctrine is benignant to men, than these exulting and enraptured Hosannahs.

But I question if anything can make the distinction so manifest as just a specimen. We believe in the Saviour's Intercession. That is a doctrine and a tenet, but, translated into the Saviour's words, what is it? "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Or, again, we ask, "What is Effectual Calling?" and in words most sound and comprehensive, you answer, "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel." But again we ask, "What is Effectual Calling?" and in Christ's own words the answer is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." For the sake of clear ideas and fresh impressions, it may be well to read or hear Christ's truths in the words of man; but if you want the truth as it is in Jesus, you must sit at His own feet and

listen to His own voice. You must gather the fruit where it grows, and the flowers whilst yet they bloom. You must listen not only to David's hymn but to David's harp, and try to catch not only the Saviour's truth but the Saviour's tone.

3. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. In its doctrinal largeness let it inhabit your convictions, and in its Divine lovingness let it be infused into your spirit. And now we add, lastly, let its lifesome energy inspire your character. Exhibit the Saviour's truth in its transforming power. Then, indeed, will Christ's Word dwell in you richly when it not only fills up your soul with sincerity and spiritual-mindedness, but exhibits itself in a radiant efflorescence over all your conduct. To have the Word dwelling in you so richly is to be Scripturalized —to have *Christ's* Word so dwelling is to be Christianized.

And were it desired to give a specimen of this transforming Word, we need not go beyond the context. Indeed, dear brethren, he would be a signal character in whom this 3d chapter to the Colossians dwelt completely —the man who should show plainly that he was risen with Christ, and that his life was hid with Christ in God, and that Christ was his life and his all in all, and that his affections were set on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. And oh! we need to see in the Church some Christ-loving and Christ-pervaded disciples—disciples filled with their Master's Word and Spirit—men like that ripe believer and devoted missionary whose death the Church in India will long deplore—" men," as he himself sketched their character

—" men full of ardent love to the living and Divine Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—men who can distinguish between infirmities of the flesh and the image of Christ, and love what is His in spite of all that mars it—men ready to work or cease, to do or suffer, to live or die under Christ's eye alone—men whose supreme ambition shall be perfect conformity unto and constant fellowship with the Son of God—men full of joy without levity, full of peace without presumption, full of might without pride —men who will breathe Christ, reflect Christ, diffuse Christ, savour of Christ, and glorify Christ."[1] We need to see more Christians whose piety shall not be an echo but an inspiration—not a tradition from their fathers, but a transfusion from a living Saviour, and whose movements shall betoken something better than a mannerism, even the love of Christ constraining them. Oh that God would grant it to many amongst ourselves ; that He would so fill us with Christ's Spirit that Divine things would be our daily element, and so kindle us with Christ's love, that, like flame pointing upwards, our affections should always " seek the things above." Surely it is possible. Spirit of the living God, Thou art not straitened. Look piteously on us, a company of carnal and earth-cleaving professors. Breathe on us that we may live—breathe, that we may be filled with a heavenly vitality—that Christ may be Himself our Life, our Joy, our All in all. May we be the baskets of silver, and Christ's doctrine the apples of gold. May we be the censers, and Christ's Spirit the incense. May our conduct be the mirror, and Christ's walk the

[1] Preface to Brown's *Hope of Glory*.

reflection. May our heart be the fleshly table, and Christ's mind the inscription. Hide our life with Christ in God, and may He appear in us till we appear with Him in glory.

And should the Word of Christ, and Christ in the Word, thus dwell in us, the effect will be, that what is sensual and devilish in us will die (vers. 5-8). God made man only a little lower than the angels, but as some one has strongly expressed it, "man has made himself half-beast, half-devil." And it is affecting to see what strong possessions divers lusts and passions have become, so mighty and overmastering, that the victims of them feel their helplessness, and, surrendering to their sway through their lusts and passions, they are led captive by the devil at his will. One is haunted and inhabited by the spirit of covetousness, and, for the sake of paltry gains, will be guilty of the most rapacious and cruel deeds, or will tell the most fearful falsehoods. Another is possessed by an unclean spirit which loves to wallow in the mire, and whose tainted thoughts and mephitic words make him a Magor-Missabib, a horror to all around. And another—his name is Legion—for, like the Cave of the Winds, his spirit is the home of emotions fierce and frantic, "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy," hot resentments and burning revenge against his fellow-men, proud, rebellious, and impious arrogance towards his God. But just as in the days of His sojourn Jesus spoke the word and the devils fled—so let Christ's Word now enter a haunted soul, and the false spirit and the filthy one, the demon of Covetousness and the Legion of furies, will presently flee. And let

Christ's Word abide constantly, and with supreme control, and it will never suffer the devil to enter again.

But it is not only what Christ's Word puts out and puts off, it is rather what it puts in and puts on: "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, charity or lovingness, and the peace of God." Yes, brethren, if Christ's Word dwell in you, all these things will more or less develop. You will get the peace of God, something of that repose in the Father's complacency which the Surety enjoyed, that peace which Jesus calls "*My* peace," and which in His Word He has bequeathed to you. You will get bowels of mercies, and instead of the wickedness of man awakening simple anger, it will oftener leave you mourning. And "kindness." Instead of absorbing everything towards yourself, and making all things minister to the great Self-Idol, you will become expansive and forth-going. You will be considerate of the interests and character, the comfort and feelings of others, and to do good and communicate you will never forget. And "humbleness of mind." This is the grace which lies prostrate at God's footstool, self-abasing and self-disparaging, amazed at God's mercy and abhorring its own vileness. And "meekness," the grace which, from beneath that footstool, lifts up a candid and confiding eye, accepting God's smile of Fatherly affection, and adoring those perfections which it cannot comprehend. And "long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness," those self-denying and self-conquering graces, which not only give none occasion of offence, but are not easily provoked—those magnanimous

graces, which will strive to overcome evil with good, to live it down, and love it down, and which, if all effort should fail, so far like that implement of Australian warfare, which, if it miss the mark, returns to the hand that flung it, will not be lost, but come back in peace and joy to your own bosom.

SERMON V.

THE TREASURE: THINGS NEW AND OLD.

"Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe, which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."—MATT. XIII. 52.

"If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures."—PROV. II. 4.

THE Bible is a Treasure. It contains enough to make us rich for time and eternity. It contains the secret of happy living. It contains the Key of Heaven. It contains the Title-deeds of an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away. It contains the pearl of great price. Nay, in so far as it reveals them and offers them as the portion of us sinful worms, it contains the Saviour and the living God Himself.

It is a Treasure so extensive and ample that its possessor can never exhaust it; but, like some treasures, a man may be long versant in it before he finds out its most interesting and important contents. A large library, for example, is a Treasure; but it sometimes happens that in such a library a book of the utmost rarity will lurk for ages before any one suspects its value. It will be handled and turned over, and even catalogued under some

erroneous title, and it is not till some erudite scholar begins to read it, that he finds it the long-lost poem or the missing record, for which so many men of letters have sighed in vain.—(Black Book of the Admiralty in the Bodleian, *Athen.* 1847, p. 1024.)

And so has it fared with the Bible. Treasure of God's Truth, library of eternal life, it has been reserved for successive ages to stumble on its lost doctrines and latent meanings. Not that the Bible is a book of enigmas, or that it needs some special luck or potent spell to make out its mystic sense. Far from it. The planet Neptune, of which we lately heard so much,—Lacaille, the French astronomer, saw it fifty years ago. He saw it, but did not discover it. He gazed at it and marked it down, but did not know that it was aught remarkable. His mind was made up that it could not be a planet, and so he missed the glory of adding to our solar system another world. The Black Book of the Admiralty has been in the Bodleian for near two centuries. It has been greatly missed. Historians of the English navy would have given a great deal for a sight of it. And Oxford librarians often saw it. But they never suspected that the thin, inconspicuous quarto which had stood so long among the Selden Manuscripts was anything remarkable; and it was not till a stranger sat down to rummage among their archives that its real character was detected, and the runaway restored to the nation and to history. And many a Bible truth has shared the fate of Neptune and the Admiralty Book. There it is now, but there it has been for eighteen centuries, simple, obvious, self-evident.

And men were not absolutely ignorant of it. Like the planet, they looked at it—like the volume, they handled it—and they had a theory of it. They had some way to dispose of it. But from a prepossession in their mind, they assumed that it was something else than it purported to be. And so they missed its meaning and its value.

Take, for instance, the cardinal Truth of the Gospel. The commodity in which our world is most wanting is Righteousness. That Moral Excellence which excites the complacency of a holy God; of weight so full that the Law finds in it no deficiency, and of lustre so pure that Omniscient Sanctity perceives in it no blemish; that Righteousness which, were it appearing at Eden's portal, the cherub would sheathe the flaming sword and let it enter; or, were it in Heaven itself, would find itself so much in unison with all around as to dread no challenge and forebode no banishment—a Righteousness which, with calm bosom and elated step and confiding eye, could approach the Judgment Throne of God—a Righteousness like this, which would make its possessor the happiest being in our Earth, is on Earth utterly unknown. It is our world's great desideratum; and when once a conscience is awakened, a righteousness like this is the prize for which the guilty and anxious soul would gladly give its all; and it is in desperate endeavours to find or produce something like this that the convinced and sin-burdened often put forth their strength and their prayers. But the attempt is useless. Our world does not even contain the materials from which such a righteousness can be constructed; and whilst an enlightened conscience

must feel that without a righteousness he dares not appear in God's presence, he also feels that such a righteousness exists, neither ready-made in his bygone history, nor likely to be created from his present resources. But whilst Righteousness is the commodity in which our world is most deplorably lacking, whilst it exists neither as an heirloom from our ancestors nor can be got to grow from the soil of our corrupt nature, it cometh down from heaven. There was a righteousness wrought out long ago by our earth's Illustrious Visitant, achieved in this very world and in this very nature by God's co-equal Son, —an affluent and redundant righteousness, as dear and delightful to the Father as it was free to the sinner—the righteousness of the sinner's representative, but withal the righteousness of God. The object of the Incarnation was to work this righteousness out, and to bring it in. The object of the Gospel is to circulate this righteousness from door to door—to publish it in every clime, and press its acceptance on every sinful wretched man. This exotic commodity, this heavenly importation, the Gospel reveals and recommends. But, just from that prepossessed inadvertency of which we have spoken, from the mind being otherwise occupied, the world's eye was holden for ages, so that it could not see the richest freight of Heaven's argosy, the most precious pearl in the Bible Treasure. When Luther was startled into that awful solicitude about his soul, which kept him in years of agony, he says that he had a particular desire to understand the Epistle to the Romans; but what prevented him was the expression at the very outset—"the righteousness of God." "To this

righteousness I had a great aversion, for I thought it meant God's *character* as the righteous Judge; and though, as a monk, I had lived a blameless life, I found myself a great sinner before God, and I did not dare to think of pleasing Him by my own works. Because He punishes sinners, I did not love this just and angry God. I hated Him, and felt incensed against Him. Still, that I might find out the meaning of that passage, I studied the beloved Paul; for I thirsted to know it, and spent on it night and day, till I noticed how the words are connected together, 'the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, as it is written, The just shall live by faith.' I saw the apostle's meaning, that by the Gospel is made known that righteousness which avails with God, in which God, out of mere mercy, makes us righteous through faith. On this I felt as if I was wholly born anew. The precious Scripture now appeared quite another thing to me. I ran quickly through the whole Bible, and collected all that it says on the subject. And thus, as I had hated the expression, 'God's righteousness,' I began dearly to love it, as the gladdest word in Scripture; and that passage became to me the very gate of Heaven."

Now, here was an old thing which had been hid for so many ages in the Treasure of the Word, that, when Luther proclaimed it, it had all the light and power of novelty. It was not so much that the Bible itself was new, as that its cardinal Truth was new. Nor was it that men had never read these words before. It was not a new manuscript or lost version of the Romans which Luther had discovered, but the regular standard, on which

Occam and Aquinas and a hundred schoolmen had commented. Nor had they overlooked the passage. Like Lacaille with the new planet, they had fixed their glasses on it, but they misconceived its nature. They read it as if the Gospel revealed God's *character* of Justice, not God's *gift* of Righteousness; and from a Gospel so grim, no wonder that they turned away to saints and angels as mediators more suitable and intercessors more gracious. But snatched from beneath the mediæval bushel, and set on the candlestick of the Reformed Confessions, that blessed Truth—"the Lord our Righteousness,"—shines athwart these midnight seas, the Church's Pharos; and to souls crying from the depths of conscious sin, its pure and steady comfort is the brightest morning star.

Or, take another instance how long a Truth may lurk in the Treasure of the Word before the Steward of that Word, the Church, brings it forth to view. When ascending into heaven, the Saviour said to his apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and so plain was the injunction, and so affecting were the circumstances in which it was spoken, that for a century or more it haunted the Church's ear, and disciples went everywhere preaching the Word. But, just as a familiar volume will fall out of sight in an extensive library; or, if recovered, will no longer be recognised, but be bandied unopened, to and fro, as something very commonplace, so this precept, once so dear and potent, dropped out of memory, and ages after the Church had recovered the evangelic doctrine it still lacked the evangelizing spirit. And though some solitary devotee—

an Eliot, a Ziegenbalgius, or a Zinzendorff, might wander forth to some outlandish tribe, in the fulness of his Christian zeal, such isolated and single-handed efforts did not create a Missionary Church, nor fulfil the Redeemer's last Commission. And it was not till fifty years ago that, with swift surprise and simultaneous vividness, the conviction struck the holiest men in all the Churches and in either hemisphere, that most of the world was Pagan yet, and the great task of Christendom was standing still. As if the echoes of Olivet had awaked again, or the Lord Himself had spoken the word once more, it passed from mouth to mouth, "Go ye into all the world;" and, so far as millions of Bibles and thousands of missionaries can do it, the effort is made now to preach the Gospel to every creature. It is not that a text had dropped out of the Bible, and that Fuller, or Bogue, or Simeon, or Love had been so fortunate as to find it again; but though the text was still there, the solemnity and tenderness had all drained out of it, and it stood tame and trivial, till the Spirit of God filled it with fresh power, and, inspiring it anew, made it a novelty. It was not that another voice from Heaven repeated the Commission; but, opening the Church's ear to the voice which had never waxed silent, the Lord startled His people from the deafness and dimness of a dream to the brightness of a sun far ascended and the briskness of a toil too long neglected.

Time would fail to teach the parallel stories of the Bible and the Church, and show how new circumstances in the one often gave new significance to the other, and how, instructed by the great Enlightener, one scribe after

another evolved new lessons and new duties from the old text-book, and the householder brought new truths from the ancient Treasure. Long ago Inspiration said, "A wise man is strong;" and dissolved in a powerful mind and crystallized again, Solomon's sentence reappeared in Bacon's aphorism, and a busy and inventive age takes the maxim for its motto, and in daily discoveries repeats it: "Knowledge is power." Long ago the same Inspiration said, "God hath made of one blood all nations to dwell on the face of the earth," and still more pointedly, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them." And for ages the still small voice crept round the world, but though it landed on the Guinea shore, and saw the father felled, and the wife and children dragged away to slavery, and landed in the West India Isles, and saw the survivors sweltering in broken-hearted bondage, the voice was still and small, till it whispered in Christian ears, and then it woke the echoes of the world. And long ago the same Inspiration said, "For the mind to be without knowledge is not good;" but English squires, and even English clergy, held the creed that "Knowledge is not good for the common people"—till crowded prisons and dear police—till blazing ricks and bloody riots, even in sight of Canterbury's mystic minarets, published anew the Bible lesson, and proclaimed the curse and crime of Popular Ignorance.

God's Word is the World's best heritage. In the Bible as in the Saviour are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, but like Joseph's brethren loath to be deeper in Joseph's debt, it is only a famine or sore emergency that will

send a reluctant world to this storehouse of eternal Truth. And the Church may be thankful for that calamity without or that crisis within which has the effect of freshening up a faded doctrine, or reviving a neglected duty, or filling with joy and power an obsolete promise. Welcome that poverty which sends us back to this unfailing Magazine. Welcome that panic of approaching ill, welcome that pinch of present pain, which sets people to besiege these doors, and ransack that olden Treasure. Welcome that year of famine which brings out again the widow's cruse, and sings again Habakkuk's psalm. Welcome that year of tottering commerce which throws the world back on Solomon's wealth of nations and reinstates the Bible as the best Mercantile Directory. Welcome those controversies even which bring back into the Church a living and reigning Saviour, and those catastrophes which fling His people over on His faithfulness and all-sufficiency, which make obsolete experience actual and old psalms new. And welcome even that flood of persecution, or that fire of martyrdom, if brighter than the furnace be seen the form of the Son of Man, and louder than the many waters be heard His assuring voice, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

The experience of the Church is also the experience of the individual Christian. He too is a householder, and the Bible is his Treasure; and if he be well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, he will be constantly bringing out of his Treasure things new and old.

The Bible is distinguished by a Divine exhaustlessness, a miraculous reproductiveness of meaning, life, and power. It is sometimes called a Lamp. Well, you set out on a long journey overnight, and at first your lantern flames so large and clear that you march along, a moving tent of radiance through the gloom. But before midnight your pavilion of mimic sunshine has dwindled down to a little wisp of dusky rays, and you can hardly distinguish brake or brier, field or ford. But it is just the opposite with the Bible lamp. When a man first takes it for his guide, its light is very feeble. Perhaps he is not well acquainted with it; perhaps he has not proved the truth of a single saying; perhaps he only half-believes it. It is a spark, and may perhaps expire. However, with its help he gets forward a few steps, and it begins to brighten up. Very good,—this will do. He advances more securely, and it shines more clearly, till, no longer groping and stooping and putting forward a timorous foot, he stands erect and walks at liberty. And if the night grows darker, still the lamp burns brighter; and so step by step, and stage by stage, till at last the night is well-nigh past, but like a morning within the morning, the lamp is still clearer than the dawn, till he lays it down, for he has got where the Sun is shining. The path which it creates is brighter and brighter unto perfect day. And it is sometimes called Bread. It is not the least hardship of a journey to find the provision scanty. Foot-sore and weary, to be constrained to husband the morsel, for you know not where you may find another meal, this deepens terribly the miry path, and lengthens the

rainy miles. But if God's Word be the food of your spirit, it will not only be daily bread, however long your travel lasts, but to-morrow's meal will be richer and more refreshing than to-day's. And here and elsewhere the Bible is called a Treasure. Of some the treasure is a scanty scrip,—two mites, or half a shekel,—their own earnings, their own sagacity, their own character; but this Treasury is infinite. Pardon, salvation, those promises of God which prayer can convert into sure and present mercies, free grace, the love of God, the communion of saints, the hope of glory,—each of these has boundless value. The believer may use them, but he cannot spend them, for after he has brought out all the things, new and old, which he needs, or can possibly think of, he will find that there still remains in the Treasure what he cannot get out, even all the Fulness of God.

My dear friends, it would weary you were I to follow out what I did design, and show the parallel betwixt the Church's experience and that of an individual Christian in his investigation and discoveries of the Word. But I am loath to end without a few sentences, such as I pray God to bless to your immediate profit.

1. To you, householder, who have found no Home for your spirit, here is a safe and happy one. Dwell in the Word of God. You have read about the City of the Rock, a city hewn out in the living marble cliff, streets and rows of houses not built on the ledges, but chiselled out tier above tier in the solid stone—the safest and most enduring structures that human skill could devise, for the flood could not sweep them away, the old artillery

could not shatter them, the firebrand could not scorch them, and he would be a daring assailant who offered to scale them. And most enduring, for though a hundred generations have passed away since the first inmates nestled in them, they are nearly as entire and strong as ever. But a better Petra is the Word of God. Though the proud Amorite made his nest in the top of the Rock, even from that defiant eyrie the arm of Jehovah could hurl him. But whoever finds refuge in the Word of God finds a castle for his conscience, a shelter for his spirit, from which God will never dislodge him, and none other dare. And should any of you, my dear hearers, be anxious for your souls, should you wish to find a fortress where wrath can never reach you, and the devil dare not harm you, Salvation is a strong city, and in its rock munitions your sheltered spirit may rejoice,

> "As happy, but not more secure,
> The glorified spirits in Heaven."

If it be the word of the living God in which your soul seeks a refuge, "The mountains may depart and the hills be removed," but its faithfulness cannot depart, nor its covenant of peace be broken; and if in any Yea and Amen assurance of that Word, if in any chamber of that Fortress your soul be found at death, or at Christ's appearing, even as God cannot lie, so your soul cannot perish. Just as in the Father's house there are many mansions, so to suit the various mood and divers case of anxious souls, there are many chambers and compartments in the Gospel-citadel; but the very lowest and simplest, if you can only reach it, is Salvation. The nearest to the level,

but still cleft in the Rock, is called "The Faithful Saying," and above its doorway you read, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and on its walls are inscribed the names of many refugees, the autographs of those who, fleeing from the wrath to come, found their first asylum there, and among the rest you may decipher the apostolic M'Gillivray and Bilney the Martyr, Poor Joseph and the Apostle Paul. Then comes another chamber called "The Sure Foundation," and its motto reads, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded;" and another called "The Fountain Opened," and here I read a Hebrew name, the old prophet Zechariah, and a mark without a name, which they say was marked by a robber whom they carried hither in his mortal agony, and who that same day went to Paradise; and under that mark is written a verse in English :—

"The dying Thief rejoiced to see
This fountain in his day,
And there have I, as vile as he,
Washed all my sins away."

And this verse is signed "John Newton." And beyond this is the strongest niche in all the Fastness—but they say that for many ages the entrance was closed—and the first of the new set of names is in German characters, "Martin Luther." The door of it is now fastened back, that it may never close again, and over it is written, "Jehovah Tsidkenu"—the Lord our Righteousness. Further up, the ascending path comes out on a pleasant prospect, and there is a sweet arbour there. They say that it was John Bunyan's favourite seat, and it is still more

interesting as the spot where the Apostle John breathed his last. They call it "Come, and welcome to Jesus Christ," and on the roof of it are written the last words of the Bible. And then, at the very summit of this saving stronghold, is the most spacious chamber of all, so vast that it held all the five thousand of Pentecost, and could have held all Jerusalem as easily—so lofty, that from its battlements the world looks little, and heaven looks near, and so secure that there is no instance where any was hurt, so long as he tarried there. They call it "Free Grace," and on its open and inviting door is written, "Grace reigns," but within many a Gospel is blazoned on its walls: "The gift of God is Eternal Life;" "God so loved the world;" "This is the Record." But whatever may be the aspect of Gospel Truth for which you have most affinity—whatever may be the form of the great Mercy which most closely fits your case—it is your blessedness that every Gospel-text, every niche and chamber in this city of the Rock, is wrath-proof and hell-defying. Take care that it be not some notion of your own, take care that it be some faithful saying of God in which your spirit seeks its refuge, and you may shout a challenge to the hosts of darkness, and rejoice over a guilt which can no longer reach you, and a death which cannot harm you. God cannot lie; and if, fleeing for refuge, you have run to the Hope set before you in the Gospel—if, nestling in some invitation or promise of God's changeless Word, you are resolved that Death and the Judgment shall find you there, you are safe. The way to honour God is to trust His Truth, and hidden in His

Word you are also hidden in His love. Rest there. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

SERMON VI.

A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field."—MATT. XIII. 31.

"It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it."—LUKE XIII. 19.

WHEN we read a passage like this we have two things to do. We have first of all to ascertain the meaning of the words, and next we must determine the precise point or purport of the parable.

The plant which yields mustard is pretty well known, at least every one knows the bright yellow flower which too often in the months of May and June makes the cornfields golden. The hard black seed of that charlock, when crushed, is hot and pungent, and is extensively sold as mustard; and the true mustards are species of the self-same genus. In England they grow to a height of four or five feet, and in the warmer climate and rich soil of Palestine they become much taller and more luxuriant.

Few interpreters, however, are content with such an "herb" or vegetable. They want a literal "tree," with a wooden trunk, and large enough for birds to build nests in the branches. So they suggest the *Cissus arborea* and

Salvadora persica—trees which no man was likely to sow in his "garden," and which the original word would never suggest to a Greek or Hebrew hearer. Others, aware that *sinapi* is the well-known herbaceous mustard-plant of husbandry, are naturally anxious to magnify it as much as possible. Thus Rabbi Simeon Ben Chalaphtha is frequently quoted, who says, "There was in my field a stalk of mustard, into which I was wont to climb, as men are wont to climb into a fig-tree." The Rabbi does not tell us his size, but either he himself must have been very small, or his powers of imagination very great.

If we look at Matt. xiii. 31, Mark iv. 31, and Luke xiii. 19, in the light of those locutions and usages which govern every language, we shall find no difficulty. This seed is sown, and when it is sprung up it becometh "greater than all herbs"—taller than the pulse and dill and other pot-herbs around it—in fact, "a tree"—so arborescent that the finches and other little birds which are so fond of its seeds alight in its branches. Not a word is said about their building their nests, as some have imagined; they simply perch or "lodge;"[1] and there is no need to picture up among the boughs an eagle or osprey, or any such *rara avis* as Rabbi Simeon. The mustard is a little seed, but sown in a favourable soil it shoots up, and by and by can scarcely be called an herb; it is quite a tree, so that the birds which come to devour its seeds are hidden in the branches.

Such is the meaning of the words. Then for the purport of the parable. Some of the Fathers take occa-

[1] κατασκηνοῦν, "tabernacle."

sion from it to descant on the medicinal virtues of the substance itself. Augustine says that mustard has the power of expelling poison; and just as the mustard-plant overtopped the other herbs, so the true doctrine will outgrow and cast into the shade sectarian dogmas. Hilary remarks that, just as the sharp flavour of the mustard-seed is brought out by trituration, by crushing and grinding, so the efficacy of the Gospel is brought out by persecution and affliction. The other "herbs" are the prophets, whose preaching was given to the weak and sickly Israelites; but the branches of the mustard tree are the apostles, to whom, like little birds tossed in the tempest, the nations resort, and, wearied with the storms raised by the prince of the power of the air, seek refuge in the branches.

All this may be ingenious, but it is quite irrelevant. The design of the parable is obvious; the underlying thought is simple and single. A little germ and a large result, a small commencement and a conspicuous growth, an obscure and tiny granule followed by a vigorous vegetation, the "least of all seeds" and "the greatest of herbs," such is the avowed contrast of the parable; and the resemblance to this of the gospel or the Christian dispensation is the declared lesson of the Lord.

Is it not so when we glance at the history of real religion in the *World*, in *communities*, in the *individual soul?*

1. For instance: what a little and unlikely thing was the cradle of Bethlehem! Most cradles come to nothing; most infancies result in very ordinary specimens of up-

grown humanity; and to the outside spectator there was no particular promise in the cradle watched by that Hebrew mother. It was not a cot of ebony or ivory, curtained with tapestry and covered with some wonder of the loom, and beneath such silken canopy as guards and glorifies the slumbers of imperial infancy. It was placed in a stable, and was in fact the manger, where a little while before the ox had munched his provender—cobwebs were the canopy, a carpenter's cloak the covering. Nothing could look liker the outset of an abject existence, the germ from which you would expect a very poor and vulgar history to spring. Thirty years after, you could only expect to find the occupant of that manger grown up into a rough, hard-handed, toil-worn man, tramping out and in among the boors of Bethlehem, tending these cattle like the foster-brother who had grown up among them, and exerting rude energy in feats of rustic sport or prowess.

Thirty years passed on, and the tender plant had grown up, the root out of a dry ground began to bud forth and blossom. Jesus was manifested to Israel, the son of Mary had become the marvel of Palestine. In words such as earth had never heard, because man had never spoken, He was revealing the Father; He was bringing God into the abodes of men—into the hovel of the fisherman and the haunts of the trader; and, with prodigies of power, such as seemed a natural accompaniment of supernatural sanctity, He was healing the sick, was raising the dead, was stilling the tempest, was feeding the hungry, and was on every side awakening the question, "When Messias

cometh, will he do greater miracles than this man doeth?" Even so. Blade by blade, and branch by branch, the seedling of Heaven had expanded till a shekinah was visible in its Burning Bush; and the child born in the stable, the infant cradled in Bethlehem's manger, answered to the name, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!

Dark, hard, unlovely, there is no resemblance between that seed and the luxuriant plant so broad in its branches, in its blossoms so golden. Such a mustard-seed was the Cross of Calvary. To those who had begun to look for redemption in Israel, that Cross was a crushing disappointment: to priests and Pharisees it was a source of savage exultation: to the rabble of Jerusalem it was an exciting spectacle and the tragic finish of a strange career; and whilst, like a sword, it pierced through Mary's soul, it was the tombstone under which disciples saw buried their hope and joy. The grain of seed fell into the ground and died. How different the scene two months thereafter! Jesus is by this time risen: He has gone back to His glory: the Holy Ghost is given, and in the new light which from the prophets and psalmists has broken forth the gloom has cleared off Golgotha: Gethsemane's crushed and blood-stained sod comes out the battle-field where the Captain of Man's Salvation has conquered; and the Cross of Calvary, instead of the extinction of man's best hope, because the destruction of man's best Friend, stands forth the altar of the one accepted sacrifice—the door of hope in our dark valley, the ladder with its foot on our sinful world, and Heaven

reconciled at its summit. Not two months, when this seed has begun to shoot forth gloriously. Not two months, when that Cross is lifted up, and, looking to Him whom they have pierced, Jerusalem's inhabitants begin to weep. Again it is lifted up, and thousands more are melted. It travels out of Palestine, speeds across the seas, penetrates strange lands, and still God's Spirit goes with it. The savage, coarse and hispid, learns from it God's mercy, and rises from his knees—a new, a mild, and gentle creature. The scorning sage, as he struts along, and with curled and contemptuous lip disdains mankind, espies its love divine, and conscious of a mysterious magic, a benignant balm which has got somewhere in about his heart, the great deep opens, a fountain begins to flow in his once arid but now dissolving nature, and he goes forth midst his fellows, a sunshine in his face, and a hand open as day to melting charity. With red arms the robber clasps it, and in its mighty expiation the crimson turns to snow. With remorse already stinging, the blasphemer presses to his burning bosom the healing tree, and the undying worm is no longer there. In life's last hour the awakened reprobate sees, in Christ crucified, the full range of God's mercy, and from the jaws of perdition is transported to Paradise. And thus, with the powers of darkness in its front and an altered world behind it, the Cross of Christ moved on; and though some Jews stumbled and some Greeks were foolish, it soon proved itself to the various races of mankind God's saving power—till of all seeds the least and most unlikely had overtopped all other herbs—had outgrown the philosophies, and supplanted

the religions of the East and West, and sent out its branches to the world's end.

2. So with communities: So with the history of religion in given regions or localities. In the year 1789 the crew of the ship *Bounty* turned their captain and officers adrift, and carried the ship away. After many adventures the nine surviving mutineers landed in the little island of Pitcairn, with the heathen wives they had brought from Tahiti, and some Tahitian men. Their first years passed in quarrels and feuds, in drunken brawls and deliberate murders, till in 1800 John Adams found himself the only man in all the island. His conscience was awakened by frightful dreams; but though the island was cut off from all the world, happily he had a Bible and a Prayer-Book which still remained from the stores of the old *Bounty*. By reading that Bible he found how a sinner may obtain forgiveness, and as the patriarch of the island he set to work to instruct the children and the Tahitian women: And such was his success that when in 1814 Captain Beechy visited Pitcairn, he found it peopled by a race "virtuous, religious, cheerful, and hospitable" beyond all precedent,—patterns of conjugal and filial affection, devoting the Sabbath entirely to reading and serious meditation and prayer, permitting no work to be done that day, and with a standard of truth so strict that even irony was frowned on as a sort of falsehood. And all this truth and probity and mutual affection had sprung from the single mustard-seed—the one copy of the Scriptures to which the awakened conscience John Adams went for consolation.

Nearer home, but far out in the Western main, is a little island round which for nearly half the year the Atlantic clangs his angry billows, keeping the handful of inhabitants close prisoners. Most of it is bleak and barren; but there is one little bay rimmed round with silvery sand, and reflecting in its waters a slope of verdure. Towards this bay one autumn evening 1300 years ago a rude vessel steered its course. It was a flimsy bark, no better than a huge basket of osiers covered over with the skins of beasts; but the tide was tranquil, and as the boatmen plied their oars, they raised the voice of psalms. Skimming across the bay they beached their coracle and stepped on shore,—one, two, three, as many as twelve or thirteen, and on the green slope built a few hasty huts and a tiny Christian temple. The freight of that little ship was the Gospel, and the errand of the saintly strangers was to tell benighted heathen about Jesus and His love. From the favoured soil of Ireland they had brought a grain of mustard-seed, and now they sowed it in Iona. In the conservatory of their little church it throve, till it was fit to be planted out on the neighbouring mainland. To the Picts with their tattooed faces, to the Druids peeping and muttering in their dismal groves, the missionaries preached the Gospel. That Gospel triumphed. The groves were felled, and where once they stood arose the house of prayer. Planted out on the bleak moorlands, the little seed became a mighty tree, so that the hills of Caledonia were covered with the shade; nor must Scotland ever forget the seedling of Iona, and the labours of Columba with his meek Culdees.

And if God give the increase, who can tell to what mighty trees those little seedlings may grow, from that hardy nursery transplanted to Canada and Australia, to Calcutta and Amoy, to Caffraria and Old Calabar?

3. So with the rise and progress of religion in the individual soul. "The just by faith shall live,"—a text so small, long latent in Luther's memory, and long dormant, when quickened by God's Spirit, became not only gladsome liberty to himself, but the germ of a glorious Reformation. And so, "a word, a thought, a passing sentence, may prove to be the little seed which eventually fills and shadows the whole heart and being, and calls all thoughts, all passions, all delights, to come and shelter under it."[1]

A great encouragement to those who are teaching others. Whether it be your Sabbath scholars or your own children, it is not so important that they should commit to memory great quantities of Scripture, long chapters or long Psalms, as that they should have indelibly engraven on their hearts a few of the most precious portions—Psalms like the 23d and 103d—hymns like "Rock of Ages" and "I lay my sins on Jesus"—texts like those faithful sayings which proclaim the love of God, the cleansing blood of Christ, the power of believing prayer. A tract in the pocket, a Testament in the trunk, is a good thing, and may lead to the happiest results; but as the youth goes away and leaves you, a text in the memory is better—some great saving truth, terse and simple as it occurs in the lively oracles, or as it has been in-

[1] Alford.

woven in immortal verse or more immortal music, or as it has been embalmed and made for ever sacred by some tender association, some touching incident or earnest exhortation. When the set time comes—in the distant colony, in the tropic ship, in the house of bondage, serving the citizen of a far country, and envying the husks which the swine do eat,—that faded but familiar truth may return upon his memory, and as he ponders, long-closed founts of feeling may re-open, till the resolve is made, "I will arise and go to my Father."

And a great encouragement to those who are trying to find favour for any useful plan or good idea. As long as it remains in your own mind it is the seed in the mustard-pod; but cast into the field, the garden, it will grow. Thus David Nasmith's notion of a house-to-house visitation of the London Poor has grown into those Town and City Missions which are the salt, the saving element, in our overcrowded centres. Thus the first Biblewoman has been repeated till they number near 200. Thus John Pounds's little scapegrace, bribed by a hot potato to come for his daily lesson, has multiplied into our Ragged Schools, with their thousands of teachers and myriads of scholars. Thus the notion of Total Abstinence in the hands of Father Mathew reduced the whisky-drinking of Ireland from twelve millions of gallons in one year to not more than five millions. And thus any true and living thing will grow, if it gets but a good and honest soil, and is so happy as to receive its fair proportion of sun and shower.

Which suggests our concluding thought—the treatment

we ourselves should give the truths of God. An acorn on the mantelpiece, a dry bulb in a dark cupboard, a mustard-seed in your pocket or a pill-box, won't grow. The only crop you can hope for is from the seeds which you cast into the ground and take pains with, till it sends up first the tender blade and by and by the branching stalk. So texts or truths in the memory are acorns on the shelf, seeds in the pill-box. It is good to have them, but don't leave them there. Take out any one you like and plant it. Ponder the saying till it grows wonderful —till its meaning comes out, and you feel some amazement at its unsurmised significance. Ponder it till, like the phosphorescent forms of vegetation, the light of its expanding falls on other passages, and revelation is itself revealed. Ponder it till the smallest of seeds becomes the greatest of herbs, and a brief maxim of heavenly wisdom develops in your conduct a beauty of holiness. Ponder it till, like the bulb taken out of the cupboard, it is no longer dead and dry, but, with the scent of water at its roots, and looking forth at your lattice from its pedestal of amethyst or beryl, it warms with summer hues the wintry weather, and sends through all the hidden chambers of your heart exotic perfume—suggestions of the joy which even now exists elsewhere, though outside and around the trees are stripped and the world is cold.

SERMON VII.

FIRST MAGNITUDES: BIOGRAPHICAL THEOLOGY.

"He was a burning and a shining light."—JOHN v. 35.

ON a cloudless evening, and about an hour after the sun has set, the stars begin to twinkle one by one, till ten or a dozen may be detected. And an hour or two later, when the whole glittering host is marshalled, the first ten or twelve are still pre-eminent. And these brightest stars we call first magnitudes. They are the foremost to arrest the upturned eye, and their fine effulgence will sometimes attract the gaze of incurious rustic, or fill young hearts with wonder. These first magnitudes are the landmarks of the firmament. We say that such a lesser star is near Sirius or Arcturus, or that it has the tint of the Lyre or Orion. And they are the sparks which first kindle scientific ardour—for were the face of the heavens besprinkled with starry dust, with evanescent and inconspicuous points of light, they would draw but little notice. It is the large and brilliant orb which blazes in the forehead of the evening sky, and which makes for a long way round it a lovelihood of light—it is this which catches and detains our earthly vision, and

kindles into devotion or intelligence some wondering spirit.

And so, looking upon the firmament of Scripture, there are a few characters which outglory all the rest, some ten, twelve, or it may be twenty stars of the first magnitude, burning and shining lights which will not let the eye away, and which haunt the memory when the eye is closed—brilliant and conspicuous names which serve as landmarks and points of reference, and which are also signals and surprises, arresting notice and awakening wonder,—signs and seasons which God has set in the world's historic sky. Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, the Baptist, Peter, John, Stephen, Paul,—you have nearly named all the first magnitudes in the Bible's older and newer Hemisphere. And though there be hundreds more of lesser lights, and though the lustre of these again is annihilated in the daylight which the Sun of Righteousness makes, still these are the overmastering names which our fancy first calls up in looking back on the Bible story, the main foci into which God has condensed the lessons which He would teach us through the persons of our fellow-men.

Now we have a great deal of Biography—yes, a great deal of religious Biography—besides that which the Bible contains. But there is one respect in which the Bible specimens are absolutely unique. In all other cases man writes the tale of man—in these cases it is written by God. The Bible narratives are of all the clearest and most complete, for they are the only narratives written in

the pure and penetrating light of the Upper Sanctuary. When Beza wrote the Life of Calvin, he might tell all that intimate friendship could discover or affectionate memory could treasure up; and when Augustine wrote his own Life, he might confess the worst which severe self-scrutiny could reveal, or a memory faithful to every misdeed could recall. But the utmost which either could record with any certainty was personal history—the self-prompted and independent doings of the isolated man. Neither the man who wrote his own biography nor the man who wrote the biography of his friend, could tell precisely and infallibly how much of Divine Providence wrought in particular incidents, nor how much of Divine Grace developed in particular propensities and dispositions. They could tell what the man was and what he did, but they could not tell so confidently how many of his doings and dispositions originated in God, and how many in himself, and how many in the devil. But this most profound and instructive narration is what the Bible supplies. It shows us not only the workings of the heart and the movements of the outward history, but it unveils those springs of action which were external to the individual altogether. It shows that hand sometimes fiendish and malign, oftener benign and omnipotent, which was constantly controlling the steps and moulding the character of a creature in whose destinies three worlds contended. And it is this which gives its interest to Bible Biography. It is a record not of heroes, but of saints. It tells not of valiant spirits, but of vessels of mercy—not of men whose own powerful will created

them, but whom the more powerful will of God made mighty and illustrious. It tells not of shining lights who kindled their own fire, but, to borrow a childlike fancy, it tells of starry apertures which Jehovah struck out in our firmament of flesh "to let his own glories through." And in studying these Bible worthies—men thus raised up and directed by God—there are two aspects in which it is instructive to consider them. We may either look mainly to their history, or mainly to their character, and in the one aspect we shall see them as *manifestations* of what God is, and in the other as the *models* of what He would have us be: stars of glory revealing God, and stars of guidance directing us.

If you turn to James v. 10, 11, you will find in one instance both combined. We often speak of the patience of Job, and the Apostle speaks of it also, but he speaks of something besides. He not only records the patience of the patriarch, but the pitifulness of God. And to the moral worth of the lesson this last is essential. The American Indian, when in majesty of self-conquest he suffers his enemies to torture his body as if it were a pine-log or the body of some other being, is patient. And so was Ladurlad when the curse of Kehama fell on him, and he wandered the world with fiery eyes and burning brain, but never succumbed to sorrow. And so is many a haughty spirit still, on whose Babel the bolts of heaven crash, and from the dusty ruin he staggers to his feet, a poorer but a prouder man. But this iron fortitude, this defiance flung in the very teeth of Fate, is not the patience which borrows strength from

God, or bows in meek submission to a wiser Will. It is self-worship after all. It is a protest for the prerogative—a desperate effort to enthrone once more the little idol *I*. To a spirit really suffering such examples are of no avail. To one who is his own all-in-all, it may do very well to quote Stoic Zeno and cast-metal Cato; but to one whose soul the iron has really entered—to one who is truly missing the familiar and dear possession, or who has felt something of his own quick and quivering heart torn away in the removal of the beloved friend—to such a one it is of no use telling how calmly in such circumstances the men of marble carried it. He must have some Deity stronger than himself to sustain him, and some hope more blessed to cheer him. And here he has at once that mighty Helper and that hopeful model. "Take the prophets for an example of suffering affliction. Ye have heard of the *patience of Job*, and have seen *the end of the Lord;* that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." On the one hand Job was a model to afflicted sufferers. With all his gallant family lately gathered round him, ten olive plants around his table—and now a solitary mourner, a riven and lightning-blasted trunk, a torn and bleeding stock. Lately an Eastern prince with trooping menials to attend him, and with luxury piled around him, and now a deserted beggar on a heap of ashes; and to aggravate his anguish and exacerbate his spirit, with fever in every vein and torture in every pore, you would scarce have marvelled if endurance could hold out no longer, and reason, scared away, had left him a pillar of moveless sorrow. But the Lord strengthened him to bear.

The Lord enabled him to resist temptations to blasphemy and self-destruction. The Lord gave him an attitude more becoming than that of the crushed and abject driveller, or of the frantic and Heaven-cursing desperado. The Lord made him submissive and devout. He taught him to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." And just as the Lord sustained him under the tremendous trial, so in due time he took His servant out of it. If Job was very patient, the Lord was very pitiful; and the same tender mercy which tempered the trial was in haste to end it. As if from some huge horn of plenty, there poured on his lot unprecedented blessings, and, along with doubled flocks and herds, the seven sons and three daughters came again. And like those stars which take a sudden start, and burn with a broader lustre than of yore, Job in his mellow age, and the Lord in His gracious ending, say to every mourner, "Be patient; the Lord is very pitiful."

And before going further, let me just repeat that in a case like Job's it is not so much the patriarch's patience as the Lord's piteousness that we perceive. The patriarch's history is fitted to show the afflicted not so much Job, the mourner's model, as the Lord the mourner's Friend. And this may possibly be a word in season to some mourner now present. You are at present in deep distress: but think not so much of the days of grief which you must yet pass through, as of the happy exit—the end of the Lord, which lies beyond them. Think of the prized possessions, the vanished joys to which you shall yet be restored, or to

another and superior set, when by an intervening trial you have been better taught their worth, and refined for a purer enjoyment of them. And if you feel that you dare not hope for such a blessed consummation—if you fear that yours can never be Job's exit, for yours has not been Job's endurance—if you feel that you have murmured and charged God foolishly, then do I say again, Job was not so patient as the Lord was pitiful. At the end of the ordeal, and confronted with the Heavenly Majesty, even Job had to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes; but all the slips and sins of the patriarch did not hinder God's tender mercies. And in these mercies do you also hope, and you shall yet exult in a glorious issue, and embrace those awful and affecting bounties which will make the Lord more dear and yourself more humble.

And in the same way we might instance lessons which the Lord has let out in the history of other patriarchs. Take, for example, NOAH. His ark was builded, and the time was come that he should enter it. But there was something very formidable in that final and conclusive step. To look over these coming months and think of all their chances and all their perils—to know that for a year together he should be a waif on the world of waters,—and what if the flood should never ebb, and the earth never again should dry? And what if their dreary ship should wander age by age, and never touch another shore? And what if some calamity should occur meanwhile, and, dashed on some beetling coast, the frail and clumsy vessel should go down? And then there was something very

damping in the sense of powerlessness. To feel that he had no control over his floating house—to have no rudder by which he could regulate its course—no scrap of canvas that he might stretch—no paddle that he might pull, so as to speed it past the place of danger, or guide it into smoother water—to have not even a loophole or look-out except a hole which showed the rotten sky—to be thus delivered in the dark, to be thus preserved by being made a prisoner, was a painful inversion of that independency and self-sufficiency which are natural to us all. And then to see the lofty mountains, which looked like ready-made retreats—to think how unlikely it was that these ever should be overwhelmed—and at all events to reason how much likelier and more lasting asylums they would prove than this precarious timber-raft—and to see the vast majority counting on these as abundantly sufficient. To bid adieu to all these chances of preservation, and adventure life and every interest on the single cast of this one contrivance, looked a fearful and tremendous step. But the patriarch took it. He felt that this contrivance was as mighty as the Divine command, and he rejoiced to be the prisoner of a promise-keeping God. Fearless and unfaltering, he stepped in, and when the clap of the closing door gave the signal to the thundering sky, Noah felt that he was now the guest of God, and need fear no further ill. And when the drowning year was done, and from the opened door he and his whole family, and his mute fellow-passengers, issued one by one, and none were missing, he saw how safe is the craziest craft which Omnipotence holds in the hollow of His hand,

and how sure the port, after the strangest voyage, where Jehovah holds the helm. Which thing was written for our learning.

There is one ark which all of us must enter, and there are two others which we ought. One ark is the great Atonement. To embark our souls, with all their everlasting interests, in the finished work of Immanuel,—this is a step which many cannot take. They look up and they see the lofty peaks. They see the sublime heights of piety which have been reached. "Oh! if I were only as good as Paul or John; if I were only as devout as David Brainerd, as heavenly-minded as Henry Martyn or Edward Payson!" And they try to clamber up to some holy or virtuous elevation; for they think if they were only good enough, high enough in attainment and character, they would escape the wrath to come. Or, if they can be persuaded to look at the provided means of safety, they would like the Atonement far better if it allowed them something to do. But merely to enter into it, and so be rescued by it, there seems something utterly inadequate and ignobly easy in this simple plan. To steer the ark, to row it, to thrust it along, to spread the sails, something active and positive they would desire, but merely to go in and stay in, to be not workers nor promoters, but merely inmates and passengers,—oh! there is self-denial and self-emptying here. Beloved hearers! have you got the length of Noah, and Noah's family? Do you feel that the Divine constitution—do you perceive that the command and promise of God make the Surety's Righteousness safety sufficient? And are you content to

be neither the builders nor the navigators of the ark, but its mere occupants? Oh, happy are you if thus reconciled to God's gracious and easy plan, and blessed will you be on that day when the ark opens on the Ararat of Eternity, and gives good account of all who ever entered it. And again, it is like entering the ark when called to perform some arduous or self-sacrificing duty. Frequently in this ill-conditioned world obligation and personal interest are quite opposed, and sometimes in commencing a course of well-doing the disciple of Jesus has to forsake houses and lands, to let go tempting bargains or refuse ensnaring compacts, or even to renounce a good appointment and quit a lucrative calling. And in obeying the Divine command and casting himself on the Providence of God, the believer is like the patriarch entering the dark and unproved ark. He knows not what shall be the issue. There is no crevice by which he can discern the course along which he is drifting; no aperture to cheer him with the sight of emerging peaks or nearer land; no window, except one overhead, to teach him that he must look up, and look no other way. And many a time the winds are loud and the waters high. In such a storm he should not greatly wonder though the whole went down, and a few spars on the billows were all that told the tale. But somehow or other, on the whole, his heart keeps up, and he often says to himself, "What would I do if it were not for that window in the roof!" till, after long waiting and many a prayer, one day the door opes and lets him out on a large and wealthy land, and he finds how good it is to be piloted blindfold to such

a pleasant place. But whatever you may think of this unreasoning abandonment of yourself to the commands of God, and whatever you may think of intrusting all your salvation to the completed work of Another, there is one occasion when the strongest swimmer may well be thankful for some such asylum. When a believer comes to die, he may have all the reluctance and all the fears which are natural to flesh and blood. He is bound for an unknown region, a world to which he has never been before, nay, a world of which he knows not the locality. And he is leaving behind him that old and essential comrade—his corporeal frame—his spirit's mate and servant during all this earthly pilgrimage, and he does not want to be done with it conclusively. He feels as if he should again like to have its telescope and microscope to look upon the works of God; and its vocal organs to hold communion with those who may bear similar bodies elsewhere. And a whole host of queries and anxieties would rush into his mind if dying, and the things which come after dying, were matters which he had to manage for himself. But all these anxious thoughts are superseded. Arrived at the ocean's edge he finds an ark prepared, and he finds a kind and skilful Pilot who undertakes it all. Blessed Saviour, wilt Thou receive my spirit? Yes, and this day it shall be with me in Paradise. And wilt Thou take charge of my sleeping dust? Yes, and I will raise it up at the last day. And wilt Thou take charge of those whom I leave behind? Yes, and I will preserve them alive; let them trust in Me. And he steps into the ark; he sleeps in Jesus, and soon leaps forth to a new world

on the hills of Immortality. To every age the history of Noah has been a burning and shining light, and the great lesson it has taught is the *faithfulness* of God, the wisdom of simply trusting Him, and promptly complying with His commands ; and it tells to every prisoner of hope, and every pilgrim in the dark, The Lord knoweth how to deliver them who put their trust in Him.

What we stated in the outset was that the Bible supplies us with a *Biographical Theology;* that from the peculiar way in which its narratives are written it exemplifies the various perfections of God, by showing their developments and dealings with particular persons. And we have taken instances. We have seen that if the Bible exhibits the patience of Job, it exhibits still more strikingly the piteousness of God ; and if it relates the faith of Noah, it records still more signally the faithfulness of Jehovah. And if another instance be desired we might name the patriarch JOSEPH. Viewed on the human side we have in his memoirs the history of a pious youth, full of brotherly kindness and filial affection, and by his good conduct and great sagacity rising to a station where he was enabled to rescue from ruin his own family, and be the princely benefactor of his unnatural brethren : but viewed on the Divine side, we almost lose sight of the pious youth, and see nothing but God's momentary and marvellous Providence. Parting at the pit's mouth, we see the Arabs riding off with their young captive, and regardless of his cries we see the shepherds, his savage and inhuman brethren, returning to their flocks and resuming their sulky road to Padan aram, to all appear-

ance parted for ever. The desert wind soon swept out the camel tracks, and next rains new grass sprang where Jacob's sons had grazed their flocks. But, unseen by man, a thread, hitherto single, had split, and had uncoiled from the edges of that pit, too fine for human eye to see or human sense to follow, but strong as the fiat of Omnipotence. From the mouth of that pit the divided thread travels two different ways, the one from Dothan travels up to the vale of Hebron, and enters the tent of an old man with a snowy beard, weeping blinding tears over a bloody mantle which they spread before him, and it travels on through chequered years of weal and woe, during which the old man draws many a heavy sigh, and amidst all their roughness and rivalry a guilty secret seems to bind his coarse and selfish sons to one another, till by and by you see a motley caravan taking the Southern track, and quitting the empty garners and burnt acres of Palestine, the lean asses and the lank and haggard shepherds limp down to Egypt; and still as they move on, the fated filament, the mystic clue, spins out from behind their feet. And from the same pit in Dothan the other branch of the unbroken thread follows the Ishmeelites down to On. It enters a palace door; descends to a dungeon; emerges again; darts up towards Pharaoh's throne, and wherever the second chariot in the kingdom rolls, that clue uncoils behind it, till after years of grandeur the sumptuous Vizier and the haggard shepherds stand front to front, and the thread which split at Dothan meets again in Pharaoh's palace, and becomes a united line once more. And such a starting, guided

round to such a meeting, we have not so much a romantic story as the mind of God revealed. Joseph's career is just Predestination made familiar, and the Providence of God made palpable. It burns and shines with present Deity, and whilst it says to the sinner, Be sure your sins will find you out, and tells that what man means for evil God manages for good, it also proclaims—

> "O but the counsel of the Lord
> Doth stand for ever sure;
> And of his heart the purposes
> From age to age endure."

SERMON VIII.

THE LAMB OF GOD.

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"—JOHN I. 29.

THE sin of the world! Sin? Sin? What is Sin?

You see that holy law? Radiant with God's own purity, and bright with a Divine benignity, it stands on earth a pillar of light and glory—a specimen of God, to tell us that He himself is holy, just, and good. And Sin defaces that monument, dilapidates it, and casts filth on what it cannot destroy.

You see that God of Love? Bending over an Earth fresh fashioned, and beaming on it those looks of complacency which hallow while they bless; and behold Him in His own image, Man, concentring those regards of love and joy, which made him what they hailed him, "Very good"—and presently see man shaking the fist of defiance, and darting the glance of estrangement and hostility at the God of Love, and you see another aspect of sin.

Look to this man, made up of divers lusts and passions! Pride, ambition, envy; vanity, resentment, anger;

covetousness, license, cruelty—these, and many evil appetites and emotions besides, flow through all his nature in fierce and malignant currents, and are his very being's poisoned blood and fevered pulse. And out they break in oaths and curses, in execrations and blows of violence, in debauchery and riot; in spoken falsehood and acted lies, in words of lewdness and deeds of shame; in the sanctuary forsaken, the Bible tossed aside, and prayer neglected or shammed over. And when, goaded by conscience, he makes an effort to amend, when to clear the cloud from affection's brow or reconcile him to himself, he makes a desperate struggle, and seeks to rend off some besetting sin, he finds he cannot. This evil habit he cannot tear away; for, like the poisoned mantle, it has grown into himself—and to tear it off is to tear fibres and nerves asunder—is to lacerate the quick and quivering flesh. This guilty affection, he cannot pluck it out, for his heart is at its roots, and nature could not stand the self-divulsion; and in this pervasive canker, this virulent and festering plague, you see sin in its malignity.

And look to this pure region, this holy paradise or radiant heaven. And what is this blot on the brightness, this shadow on the splendour? What is it which attracts so many eyes in wonder, and repels them again in horror? What is it they are expelling in amazement and disgust? Nay, rather, what is it which, abashed and self-conscious, expels itself? What is that object which from under Jehovah's burning eye, dark and dastardly, slinks away to its own place, and Eden again is bright, and heaven again is holy? What is it which, when con-

fronted with Infinite Sanctity, would fain seek refuge in the deepest cavern of the pit, and from a region of light and elevation would gladly flee to hide its hideousness and pollution in the dungeon of despair?

Words cannot paint it. It is only in the light of the Great White Throne, or by the flames of hell, or in the revealing light of the Holy Spirit, that any one can see the real character of Sin. It is the Enemy of God. It is the Transgressor of his Law. It is the great soul-poison and heart-plague. It is the only thing which really defiles or deforms the man. It is pollution, misery, guilt, incipient hell. It is the only thing to which we can give, in its fullest sense, the emphatic name of Evil.

But just as Sin is our Earth's great burden and Humanity's deforming blot, the design of the Incarnation was to do away this mighty evil in the case of a goodly number. For this end the Son of God was manifest, that He might destroy the works of the Devil; and in the case of a multitude whom no man can number, the Saviour finished transgression and made an end of sin. And though here He be called the Lamb of God, there is one aspect in which the Lamb was wrathful, and His strength was leonine. There was one vindictive feeling which, like an oven, burned in His holy bosom, and one object toward which He was filled with exterminating fury. On Sin He could not look without abhorrence, and the sight of that cursed thing which had insulted His Heavenly Father and filled a happy world with woe and horror, kindled His zeal and revenge—and whilst the Lamb's gentleness encouraged the sinner, the Lion's fury

still flashed upon the sin. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. But wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me."

But whilst it is important to remember that in Immanuel's bosom throbbed and swelled a purpose, not heroic only, because it was Divine—whilst sworn to vindicate the perfections of the Godhead, and magnify the law—whilst darting an eye of annihilating hatred at sin, and through all the storm of intervening anguish borne sublimely by foreseeing the travail of His soul, and that new earth in which righteousness dwelleth—whilst the soul of the Redeemer was inwardly sustained by these big emotions and glorious prospects, His most obvious aspect was the one in which the Baptist hailed Him—meek, gentle, and innocent, and doomed to suffer. Nay, for the sake of the one it was needful that He should become that other; and it was only in Lamb-like guise that Ariel, the Lion of God, could fulfil His lofty purposes.

Consistently with God's wisdom and justice it would

appear that there is only one way in which sin can be disposed of. It can only be ended by an exhaustive expiation, by the sinner or his substitute making full atonement for it. And as man could not atone, the Son of God undertook the atonement Himself. He assumed the nature which had sinned, assumed it all except the sinfulness. He was formed in fashion as a man ; and though He renounced no inherent perfection, for every attribute of wisdom, power, and knowledge would be needed in the work given Him to do, He veiled them, He held them in abeyance, and as He moved about in Joseph's dwelling, and by and by in the streets of Jerusalem and on the hills of Galilee, seldom did anything meet the view except a very holy and benignant being. Though engaged about His Father's business, hitherto that business was mainly a fulfilling of all righteousness ; and few suspected that He was bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows. And it was not till very near the close that the Saviour's character revealed itself as His people's sin-bearing substitute. In the greatness of His love He had volunteered to make reconciliation for the transgressors, and the time was now come for testing the powers of that ancient love. And just as when wrath began to sparkle in the old world's atmosphere, it was the signal for every creature which Jehovah had selected to seek the Ark of Refuge, so now, and in a very different way, when the hour of darkness came, it was the signal for the sins of all God's chosen to seek the victim of God's ordaining. One by one, and myriad by myriad, they came, and, dark and dismal, settled down on Immanuel's holy soul. A fearful hour

to Him! for, harmless and undefiled, He had never known sin except afar off, and now the sins of an elect world were counted to Him, and accumulated on Him. Abraham's lie and Moses' anger, Manasseh's sin who made Jerusalem run with blood, and David's who made God's enemies blaspheme, the sins of all the saved from Abel to the end of time, came in murky flight, and swarmed and clustered round the Saviour's pure and spotless soul. And as they well-nigh shut out the Father's love and the sight of accustomed Heaven, that soul began to be exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. But unutterably dear to Heaven as the Beloved of the Father was, He was bearing the sins of many, and now or never must be made an end of sin. And as punishment alone can expiate sin, the vials of indignation burst, and on the Lamb of God they poured a momentary hell. "Father, if it be possible!" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the work was done, the wrath was borne, the penalty was paid, and emerging from the flood of fiery wrath the Surety rose exulting, and flew back to the Father's bosom; but the sin was never found again. It was finished,—drowned,—dissolved; it was atoned for, and annihilated. Transgression was finished. An end was made of sin.

It was to this truth that by many types or pictorial lessons God turned the eye of His ancient people. For instance, every morning and evening in the Temple the nation sacrificed a Lamb, and at the great yearly Festival, the Passover, every family selected from the flock a lamb without blemish, and having performed various rites, they slew it, and sprinkled on the door-

posts and lintels its blood. And doubtless with that acuteness which personal solicitude produces, or rather with that sagacity which the Holy Spirit imparts, many a wistful eye saw deep significance in the familiar symbol, and when he viewed the fairest and most spotless selected from the fold, and saw it sundered from its companions, and conducted away from bright pastures where it had been alway rejoicing, and shut up in captive loneliness in the priest's or poor man's chamber, and then in silent innocence and uncomplaining meekness led forth to the altar, and then on its harmless head his own or his country's sin confessed, and the gleaming knife next moment soaking in its blood,—in this process of obvious substitution and vicarious suffering intelligent piety must have glimpsed some better thing to come. But what enlightened devotion might have surmised, the sure word of prophecy revealed; and in words which scarcely needed a Gospel to countersign, or a Philip to interpret, Isaiah expounded the whole:—"All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall

prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." And now when the Baptist, after fifteen centuries of passovers, and on the very eve of the last of them, when he who in his person was the Isthmus of two Economies, the final link between the Law and the Gospel,—"Fibula Moris et Christi"—exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" they were not only the two disciples who forsook John and followed Jesus, but all who heard were put on the tiptoe of expectation; and whether they acted as Andrew and his comrade did, whether they arose and went to see, they at least understood the allusion when the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

And having thus stated what Sin is, and what Jesus has done to take it away, I would now conclude by repeating and enforcing the Baptist's exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

1. Behold Him, and trust Him. "Without shedding of blood is no remission;" and a soul taught of God is content that it should be so. Such a soul sees a grandeur in God's law, and a lustre in God's Justice and Truth, and much as it may covet pardon, thankful as it might be for a right to Heaven, it would not wish to steal into Heaven, nor receive a pardon which made God a liar. Ah no! let God be true though all mankind should perish;

let the law be magnified, though the avenging bolt should fire the universe. And to such a soul it is relief unspeakable when it sees "mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other," when it learns that for the remission of sin blood has been already shed,—a blood which cleanseth from all sin, even the precious blood of God's own Son, as of a Lamb without blemish. And if any of you should this day be uneasy or anxious, if you wish to come to the Lord's Table, but are hindered by the sense of guilt, if you are saying, "I would fain come to the Lord's Table. I would like to join those who are keeping up the remembrance of Redeeming Love. How glad would I be to sit down with those to whom he says: 'Eat, O friends; drink abundantly, O beloved;' but I doubt if I dare. The iniquity of my heels encompasseth me about. I find something arresting me, and drawing me back, and whispering: 'How dare you?' I find my sin a weighty burden—too heavy for me. It crushes me down, so that I cannot arise. It is gone over my head, so that I cannot look up." But look out, look here, look to the Lamb of God. Look to Jesus and be lightened. Lay your sins on a sin-atoning and sin-exterminating Saviour. Behold the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world, and see if He cannot bear yours away. And however heavy the burden of the past, and however depressing the body of sin, keep looking unto Jesus, and you will sooner or later find relief.

But if there be any among you to whom the Lamb of God has no recommendation, and the Cross of Christ no

attraction, how can you escape if you neglect so great salvation? It does not matter which way it be. Perhaps you deem your sin so trivial that you yourself can put it away; or perhaps you think it so terrible that it will need all your best efforts, all your watchfulness, and prayers, and repentance for years to come, to make you sure of salvation. Whichever way it be, you are not looking to the Lamb of God. In the one case you feel that you are not bad enough to need Him; in the other, you think yourself too bad for Him to save you. But in either case you deem yourself wiser or stronger than God —wiser, if you know another name by which men can be saved, except Jesus Christ—stronger, if you think that you can work out a better righteousness than the righteousness of God. "The Justice of the Deity," as a great thinker has said it[1]—"the Justice of the Deity, not to be propitiated by any other means, pursues the transgressor over earth, and in hell; nothing in the universe can arrest it in its awful career until it stops in reverence at the Cross of Christ." There, under the Cross, is the sinner's sanctuary—there, my hearers, is the place for you and me. The first smiling look we shall get from God will be when looking unto Jesus; and the first time that we shall experience the alacrity of a lightened conscience, the relief and elasticity of the great life-burden lifted off, will be when we have laid our sins on the Lamb of God.

2. Behold Him, and love Him.

In the estimate we form of others we are apt to be

[1] Hall, vi. 300.

influenced by the opinion of the best judges—of those who have the largest opportunity of observation and the greatest powers of discernment. Here on earth we are subject to many disturbing influences, and are apt to admire or scorn, love or hate, very much as caprice may dictate or some casualty determine; but whilst our views are narrow, and our leanings partial, there is a world where all judge righteous judgment, and see as they are seen. What, then, with their loftier powers and larger observation, what do spirits made perfect think of Jesus Christ? Whilst He himself was still on earth, He saw that, with all their veneration, disciples had not discovered Him. They admired Him, but they scarcely adored Him; they loved Him, but they were not lost in Him; and so it was one of His last prayers, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Well, then, in the very place where Jesus is, what do they think of Him, and what is thought by those who best can judge? "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before THE LAMB, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." And just as His service is rapture, so His society is the sunshine of the place, the meat and drink of its inhabitants. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For *the Lamb* which is in the midst of the throne

shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." But higher than spirits made perfect are the angels who excel in strength. If there be intellect more expanded, character more holy, affections more intense, and tastes more pure anywhere in the Universe than what are found among the sons of men, they must be sought among these sons of God; and it is quite conceivable that objects which awaken our astonishment may be obscure or insignificant to capacities so transcendent as the principalities and powers in heavenly places. How then do these high natures deem of Jesus Christ? Why, all their superiority but gives the power of superior wonder. The marvels of Christ's person and work the angels desire to look into, and when God was manifest in flesh it was their privilege to see, their promotion to minister. When the Father introduced the Only-begotten into the world, He said, "And let all the angels of God worship him;" "and I," says John, "heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And when the Son of Man appears at last in His glory, He is to bring as His satellites all the host of heaven—all the holy angels with Him. And if the Lamb of God thus receive the highest homage and deepest love of all the loyal minds and holy in wide Immensity—if of all that is august and amiable, majestic and gracious, they con-

cede to Him the most glorious palm—if of all that is worthy their own verdict and eager voice be, Worthiest is the Lamb, there is only one Being in the Universe more competent to judge, and His judgment is absolute. With full knowledge of all possible perfection, and with the wide universe inviting His complacency, and open to His choice, what does God Himself think of Jesus Christ? Ere ever He quitted the bosom of the Father, He was alway His delight, rejoicing alway before Him, and no less His delight when here. In the veil of flesh, and busied in this work of Atonement, the voice from Heaven again and again saluted Him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." Yes, brethren, among all the beholders of the Lamb of God, there was no eye which beheld Him more complacently than Jehovah's own, and, whatever you may think of Him, there is no object in the Universe so glorious in the Father's view, nor so dear to the Father's heart, as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the Sin of the World.

And oh, brethren, do you love Him also? If you beheld Him from that point of view from which the redeemed in glory see Him, you would love Him. If you saw the glories of His person as holy angels see them, you would love and adore Him; and if you saw Him as God Himself beholds Him, you would be filled with ineffable complacency towards Him; He would be your delight. Yes. And if you do not love Him whom all the saved and all the sinless love, if your affection is not drawn towards Him who has long since riveted to Himself the heart of a holy Universe, there must be some-

thing wrong with you. But brother, there is a reason why you should love Him which angels and saints in glory have not. They are safe, but you are not; and if ever you get to glory, the Lamb of God must take you there. You are a sinner, and Jesus is the Friend of Sinners.

"All ye that pass by,
To Jesus draw nigh:
To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?
Your ransom and peace,
Your surety He is;
Come, see if there ever was sorrow like His.

For what you have done
His blood must atone;
The Father hath punished for you His dear Son.
The Lord in the day
Of His anger did lay
Your sins on the Lamb, and He bore them away.

He dies to atone
For sins not His own;
Your debt He hath paid, and your work He hath done.
Ye all may receive
The peace He did leave,
Who made intercession, 'My Father, forgive.'"

3. Behold Him, and follow Him.

"The next day John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." One of them was Andrew, the other is supposed to have been the Evangelist John himself. They first followed Jesus as inquirers. There were points on which they were perplexed. There were some ques-

tions which they longed to ask. They wanted more information—fresh data on which to make up their minds. But they had not courage to accost Him. He was a stranger, and one whom their Master reverenced. But Jesus soon showed Himself the Lamb of God. Instead of making Himself shy to them, or waiting till they should hail Him, he turned about and gave them the opportunity they wished. "What seek ye?" "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" "Come and see." And should any among yourselves be in the mind of Andrew and John, wanting information, wanting light—confused and embarrassed,—wishing to know Christ—be not afraid. Go to His servants; go to His ministers; go to His Book;—but above all, go to Himself. He will not quench the smoking flax; and if you desire to turn to Him, to you, O inquirer, He says, "Come and see." They went and abode with Him that night, and the next we hear of them is they are open disciples, following Him in public and in full daylight, and bringing others to Him. And if you really learn what Jesus is, if you go and see, you too will follow. Gratitude, love, and admiration will make you open disciples; and whether it be in the sanctuary or in civil life, in a station high or low, where you meet with fellow-Christians or find yourself alone, in the workshop or the drawing-room, in the camp or the barrack, at college or at school, the language of your affectionate discipleship and frank consistency will be—"I 'm not ashamed to own my Lord." And then from earnest inquirers and open disciples, you will become devout imitators; and just as the blood of the Lamb grows dearer

as the ground of your hope and the price of your pardon, so will Christ's lamb-like spirit and demeanour grow more and more attractive to your emulous and admiring love. You will strive to copy His *gentleness.* He did not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets, and in moments of provocation you will pray, "O Lamb of God, calm the perturbation of my angry spirit." You will long to possess his *guilelessness* and *innocence.* He did no violence, neither was guile found in His mouth, and you will feel that till your own character be "simplicity and godly sincerity," you are very different from the sincere and simple Lamb of God, and, as the most blessed distinction you covet here below, you will pray to be made holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. And you will not forget His *meekness* towards men, and His *submissiveness* to God. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; and after Christ's example, you will not always be apologetic and exculpatory, nor when they lay to your charge things that you knew not, will you feel as if a new thing had befallen you, and when some sore trial or stunning grief comes down, may the Angel Jehovah strengthen you to say, "Father, glorify Thy name. If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Thy will be done."

SERMON IX.

SHECHEM; OR THE TURNING-POINT.

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."—JOSH. XXIV. 14, 15.

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."—COL. IV. 12.

WILLINGLY would I hope that some here present are in earnest about their souls. Fain would I think that some have got the length of Israel at Shechem, and have by the Lord the Spirit been made so willing, that they should rejoice if this very day were the turning-point in their immortal history, the day of a decisive choice, the day when, putting other gods away, they began to serve the Lord in sincerity and truth. And such persons will not grudge, if, usin great plainness of speech, and taking advantage of that more affluent light which we now enjoy, we endeavour to explain, first of all, what is meant by serving the Lord.

1. Be reconciled.

In its natural state the mind of man is enmity against God. The developments of that enmity vary in different

minds, and in the same mind are apt to alter from time to time. But still, in some shape or other, an antagonism exists between the ever blessed Jehovah and the heart of every sinner. There is a wretched family whose affections have been mysteriously blighted. They used to love their father with fondest regard; but the feelings of the eldest-born have entirely died away from him. Playmates and strangers are more welcome companions, and he would rather lock himself up in a lonely room than submit to his father's irksome society. And another makes no secret of his aversion, but whilst he controverts his father's commands he treats with contempt his father's character, and against his father's person and procedure publishes the most flagrant falsehoods and atrocious calumnies. And a third, too respectful for open rebellion, has secret thoughts as unjust and injurious as those of the other two. He concedes the general rectitude and excellence of his father's character, and is obliged to own that he has never deceived him at any time, and yet from some strange perversity he cannot help constantly suspecting him, and all his father's overtures of kindness and yearnings of desire this shy and wrong-headed youth returns with doubt or disbelief. But whichever case it be—the filial deadness of the one, or the rabid hatred of the other, or the distrustful jealousy of the third,—it is evident that some malignant influence has come over this ill-conditioned family, and that some new element of conciliation and concord would need to be introduced before their bosoms glow with son-like sentiments towards their maligned and misrepresented father.

The enmity against God develops in three different ways. In some it exists as a total deadness of heart towards the ever-blessed Jehovah. They feel nothing but coldness towards His perfections, and nothing but constraint in His presence. In others it breaks out in open antipathy. They blaspheme His name; they desecrate His holy day: they travesty and turn to ridicule His sacred Word; and whilst they do nothing because He hath enjoined it, and forbear nothing because He has forbidden it, they repine at His providence, and cavil at His perfections, and rebel against His supremacy. And others still, who never ran to that excess of riot, and who are rather wishful that they could bring themselves to love God more, because without loving Him they fear they will never go to Heaven,—these others show that their hearts are not right with Him by their reluctance to believe Him, and by the remote and suspicious attitude in which they stand aloof from Him. But whether it be coldness and constraint, whether it be rampant antipathy and open rebellion, or whether it be mere distrust and disbelief, the carnal mind is enmity against God.

But, dear hearers, is it not very deplorable that this should be the condition of any intelligent and immortal being? Is it not awful if this condition is yours? To be the enemy of God; the enemy of Him who made you; the enemy of Him who has all your life long been loading you with benefits; the enemy of Him who put the tenderness into the breast of your earthly parents, and the devoted affection into the friend of your bosom;

the enemy of that God who so loved the world that He gave His Son to die; the enemy of Infinite Wisdom and Immaculate Purity;—is not yours a strangely guilty as well as fearfully perilous position?

And oh! thou enemy of God, what is it that God says to thee? Does He declare that thy guilt is so grievous, thy depravity so monstrous, that He will no longer treat with thee? Does He protest that having sown the wind thou must reap the whirlwind, and exhaust in an eternity of sorrow the wrath which thou hast treasured against the day of wrath? Does he say, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? To this it may come at last; but so far from saying this at present, in His amazing mercy He says, Be reconciled. In the person of Immanuel, a God of Grace approaches thee, and as He opens His arms of invitation, and stretches forth His hands of entreaty and pardon, He is ready to rejoice over thy return, for "This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found."

So marvellous is God's mercy, so entirely beyond all analogies and all calculation is this loving-kindness of God our Saviour, that it is scarcely possible for a sinner to realize at one and the same instant his own vileness and God's forgiveness. Of this I heard an instructive instance lately. There was a man who had lived for fifty years a life of fearful wickedness. In the church of Ferriby, near Hull, he heard a sermon on the text, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they

that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." He felt that having spent all his life in doing evil, he was one who must come forth to that resurrection of damnation; and he never thought of the Saviour, for he felt that his sins were too heinous to be forgiven. So great was his anguish that he lamented that God had spared Noah and his family: "Oh, had they also been swept away by the deluge, then I had never been!" And the world was now as insipid as a jest to a dying man. For weeks he continued in this sorrowful state, trying to repent—to melt his own heart, but feeling it "like a ball of iron" within him. At last he called on the minister. Mr. Milner said to him, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God," and added, "I now stand in St. Paul's place, and beg you to believe this invitation; I beg you to accept the pardon of all your sins, which Christ has purchased for you, and which God freely bestows on you for His sake." The man immediately exclaimed, "Dear sir, how can I believe that God should invite a sinful wretch like me to be reconciled to Him?" And though Mr. Milner showed him the passage printed in the Bible, and explained that God's ways are not as our ways, it was of no effect. He went away quite sure that it could not be God's invitation, but must be a misprint in Mr. Milner's Bible. But when he went home and found the self-same words in his own Bible, a swoon of blissful surprise came over him, and he felt as if wrapt in the embrace of the adorable Redeemer, and all that

night he spent in singing the praises of that Saviour who had purchased his pardon with His blood; and for many years thereafter his holy and happy life was another proof that the God who sanctifies is the God of Peace,[1] that it is by the porch of Pardon that a sinner enters the Temple of holiness and spiritual worship.

My dear hearer, do you desire to be reconciled to God? And do you not know that God desires to be reconciled to you? Have you forgotten how He has announced His name to sinners of our race; have you forgotten His aspect in the Gospel?—"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," is His name; "God in Christ, reconciling sinners to Himself," is His aspect. In the Gospel you are not summoned to a lurid Sinai or a lowering judgment-seat; but the interview to which you are invited is with a propitious Deity in a patent shrine; God in the Gospel bids you transact not with a broken covenant or a vindictive Law, but with His only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth. He calls you, not to the burning mount, and unto blackness and darkness and tempest, but to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Do you dread lest in accepting a free and gratuitous forgiveness, the glory which redounds to the Divine mercy should be glory deducted from the Divine Justice and Holiness? Then the Gospel tells you that Immanuel's atonement is so ample and august that "it declares God's righteous-

[1] Life of Mr. W. Howard of Hull.

ness for the remission of sins," and renders God "a just God in justifying the ungodly who believeth in Jesus." And do you fear lest by surrendering yourself to the joyful sound entirely and at once,—do you fear lest by listening to God's message of reconciliation instantly, and rejoicing in Him as your heavenly Father,—do you fear lest by allowing your doubts and distrusts to be swallowed up in present confidence and joy, you may lose that wholesome awe which has lately been some check to sin and some incentive to duty? Dismiss that fear; for which is likely to be the most devoted, the most diligent, and the most docile child—the child who suspects his father's love, or the child who never doubts it? Which is likeliest to be kept from sin, the soul which keeps itself, or the soul which the Saviour keeps? There is no solid foundation for piety, there is no sure entrance into the peace of God, but by heartily falling in with His way of saving sinners through Jesus Christ; and as soon as you see what provision for His own glory and for your holiness and welfare He has made in that method of Salvation, your whole soul will exultingly rest in it, and you will be reconciled to a reconciling God.

2. Distinctly and deliberately surrender yourself to God's service.

In the old schools of Philosophy it was usual for the scholars at the commencement of the term to bring some present to their teacher. And on one of these occasions, when his disciples were laying their gifts at the feet of Socrates, a poor youth hung back till all the rest had brought their offering; and there was some-

thing like a blush upon his cheek, and something like a tear in his eye—for he had neither silver talent nor golden pound—as he flung himself at the feet of the sage, and cried, "O Socrates, I give thee myself." That was a sort of self-devotement; and something still more entire and intelligent is what the Saviour desires and demands. He would have you consecrate to His service all the powers of your mind and all the faculties of your body, all your acquirements, all your ascendency over others, all the relations of life, your common calling, your week-days and sabbath-days, all your time on earth, your very selves. Yes, He would have you consecrate all that He has given you—your property and possessions, so that He shall have for His service, and that cheerfully, as much as He desires; your health, so that you shall not murmur when He takes it away; your dearest friends, so that when the Lord sends for them you shall let them go, and even when the heart is bleeding the soul shall not rebel. Love is consecration; and if you love the Saviour rightly you will feel devoted to him. For you to live will be Christ. And for many reasons it is important that this self-dedication should be explicit and express; and like Israel on the present occasion, those of you who have extensively perused the records of personal Christianity, will remember many instances where, either in the gladness of their first conversion, or at some solemn period of their history, as when recovered from a season of declension, or entering on some new calling, or looking forward to a dying hour, or some other anxious moment—the people of God have

by some sacred transaction yielded themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to His disposal and service. So that it involves no rash vow, or nothing like a legal compact; the details and the manner must be left to Christian prudence; but being a right thing it cannot be done with too much of prayerful preparation, and too much engagedness of spirit. If you believe that you are bought with a price, and if you sufficiently feel the surpassing claims and all-absorbing excellence of the ever-blessed Jehovah, you will at once perceive it your reasonable service to yield yourselves unto God, and to devote your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

3. Lead a life of daily devotion.

To "serve" the Lord is to worship. A battle is each morning fought in every Christian's closet. The morning is the key of the position. The season of morning prayer is, so to speak, the citadel, the Hougomont, the critical point of each successive day. If he wins those morning minutes the devil knows that he has won that day; and if he wins them a few successive mornings he counts on winning you altogether, and hopes by and by to see you neglecting prayer entirely. The enemy of souls well knows how important that morning devotion is, and he spares no pains to frustrate and defeat it. And he finds at such a period a great advantage in yourself. Perhaps you lay down overnight in a thankful or a holy frame of mind. Your meditation was sweet, your purpose of serving God was vigorous, and the stream of thought was spiritual. But you awaken late, on the very edge of the dizzy and distracted day, and you must leap into the dusty vortex

almost before you draw your breath. Or you awaken in low spirits, more weary than you fell asleep, loaded with cares and forebodings, and foreseeing nothing but lions in the streets of life this day. Or you awaken in spiritual languor. It feels as if you had lost your religion in your sleep. It looks as if there were no reality in Bible truths, and no blessedness in serving God. And whilst the brisk importunities of existence are bustling on every side of you—whilst the affairs of the family solicit your attention, and the day's task or the day's play bulks over your whole field of vision, the one thing needful has vanished millions of miles away. And this the tempter knows. He knows that, like the soldier shaken out of sleep, you have not only to find your armour, but, what is not so easy, you have still to muster up your fighting ardour. And so he tries to turn your flank by a sudden and rapid assault. He tries to manœuvre you out of that stronghold of the day—fellowship with Heaven—communion with God—the minute and fervent morning prayer. And should you even betake yourself to the attitude of supplication—should you remain for a few moments on your knees—he will send in upon your mind a cloud of skirmishing vanities and foolish fancies, and will keep you from fixing your thoughts on your actual employment, or offering one precise petition suited to your actual wants and to the exigencies of the coming hours. And though you may congratulate yourself on having gone through the form, the enemy felicitates himself on having won the battle; and, leaving that decisive post in his possession, you are sure to make feeble fight with the

trials and temptations of the day. Doubtless it is hard work; but oh, my friends, let us risk or endure everything rather than be driven out of that morning prayer. A few moments spent in communion with God at each opening day—a visit to the throne of grace—will freshen our spirits and revive their sacred emotions. It will fortify our hearts against the griefs and crosses which may surprise us, and, in case of threatened dangers or seducing evils, it will secure presence of mind and a present help in a present Saviour. Without such commencements of our day we cannot "fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth;" and, instead of being kept from temptation and delivered from evil, we shall find it a succession of ignoble defeats and unredeemed disasters.

4. Renounce the sins that do most easily beset you.

The Israelites were in most danger from idolatry, and therefore, as a pledge of their sincerity, and as a help to their future perseverance, if they were earnest in their present purpose to serve the Lord, Joshua requires them to put away their idols. And lest there might be any evasion, he specifies the three sorts of idols from whom they were in greatest danger: the gods of Chaldea—the idols which their fathers worshipped beyond Euphrates, the sun and moon and starry host; the idols of Egypt, Apis and Osiris, the golden calf, and such-like symbols which they saw their masters adoring on the banks of the Nile; and the gods of the Amorites in whose land they dwelt—Ashtaroth, Baal, and Dagon. "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other

side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord. Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell." Now, my friends, there is no risk of your adoring any graven image. There is no risk of your bowing down to Bel or Nebo, Dagon or Astarte. There is little danger even of your making Mary your mediator, or embracing an ivory crucifix instead of a living and glorified Redeemer. These are not, so far as you are concerned, the competitors of the Most High. Some evil habit, some sinful passion, some powerful propensity, is likely to be your master. Seek it out; ascertain what it is, and put it away. Covetousness, dishonesty, duplicity, hypocrisy, calumny, revenge, envy, evil-speaking, intemperance, laziness, voluptuousness, pride or vainglory, peevishness or murmuring, ingratitude for mercies and fear of future calamities, aversion to prayer, distaste of religious society, dislike to active employment; whatever be your master-sin, your heart-idol, your strange god, oh! drag it from the Saviour's throne, and with that sacred fury which pounded to dust and scattered on the wave a molten idol, do you demolish yours, and never rest till that sin be extirpated and it troubles you no more.

5. And in order to serve the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth, make His service your study. You see how it is with other people in their favourite pursuits. They are intent on excellence, and therefore they are glad of hints from every quarter. Their eyes and ears are always open, and nothing comes across them but their ruling

passion converts it to some practical account. And whether their aspirations be directed to the True, to the Good, or to the Beautiful, there is no limit to their progress so long as they make it their motto, "Not as though I had already attained." And if their ambition of excellence be pure and high enough, they are not only glad of friendly hints, but try to profit by envious remarks and hostile criticism. And so, dear brethren, if you are really reconciled to God, the object of your deepest desire and supreme endeavour will be the Holy, the Christ-like, the God-glorifying. You will read His Word on purpose to ascertain His will. You will contemplate Christ's character, in the prayerful hope that you may somewhat absorb and reproduce it. You will read the memoirs of eminent Christians on purpose to note the things majestic and the things lovely in their conduct. You will wait on the evangelic ministry, in order to obtain doctrine and reproof and correction and instruction in righteousness. You will cast your eye over your own conduct with a view to detect its deficiencies; and however much you may be mortified for the moment, you will extract materials for self-examination and amendment even from bitter taunts and severe reproaches. And whether, like President Edwards, you make an actual memorandum of every good suggestion—whether or not you shape it into a distinct resolution—if this vigilance over yourself, if this alertness for improvement become the habit of your mind, and if the inspiring motive be neither a self-justifying legality nor a self-glorifying pride, but if it be the new nature's instinct, the thirst of righteousness, the love

of Christ constraining you—no doubt but that you will go forward from grace to grace, and however small your beginnings your latter end will greatly increase.

6. If you would serve the Lord aright, you must consecrate to Him your ordinary calling.

My dear friends, seven years have passed away to-day since I began my labours as your pastor, and were it not for fear of entering into details too personal—I mean too egotistical—there are many things I might say now that our week of years is ended.

I have looked once more over that (to me) most solemn document, in which you first invited me to come and labour among you in the work of the Gospel ministry, and out of the 135 names attached to it I find that only a minority is present now. A few have left us to worship in other sanctuaries, a great many have gone to distant places, and some have passed away to the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. But of my original hearers, more than half are now beyond the hearing of this voice, and if they did not profit at the time, cannot profit by my preaching now. And this fugacity of my hearers, this rapid change of a London congregation, is the first sad thought which presses on my mind. The pang has been very painful, such constant parting with valued friends, and the impossibility of often returning to this place without missing from these pews endeared and familiar faces.

But another thought is sadder. Oh, my hearers, I would not offend the Lord by disparaging His goodness or denying His grace, and His work has, I trust, been done amongst us in different ways; but of that best and

most precious fruit, sound and saving conversions unto God, there has been amongst us a mournful rarity. Willing shall I be to wait till the day declare it if I could reasonably hope that I am wrong, but my impression is, that during the last year that I laboured in a little upland parish, more people came to me to speak about their souls and the great salvation than in the seven years that I have laboured in this mighty London. And without saying more, I must confess that this circumstance often makes me anxious and unhappy.

There is one part of pastoral duty in which I feel and deplore my deficiency. I wish I could maintain a more free and abundant intercourse with the members of this flock. The cordiality with which each visit is received, the pleasant and improving intercourse which I have enjoyed under so many roofs, the unfeigned affection which I have for yourselves, the belief that the Sabbath ministrations might be more precise and practical were I better acquainted with individual hearers, all makes me wish that I could see you more frequently in your own houses. But there are three circumstances which I pray you to remember, rather than think me careless or unkind. First of all, many things come betwixt the pulpit and the pastoral visit. As a member of the Presbyterian Church and a member of the Church of Christ, your minister has many things to do. One year I kept an account. And meetings of Session, Presbytery, and Synod, meetings of Committees and Congregational Classes, added to a few public meetings, amounted to 234, many of them so long as to engulf all the visiting period of the day.

And when to that are added 1200 visitors, and perhaps 2000 letters, and all the documents which in the course of a year one has occasion to prepare or print, you see how sad are the inroads on our working and studying time. But I claim your indulgence for another reason—a reason which I only mention in my anxiety that the ministry be not blamed; for it is wrong to complain of health, and silly to talk much about it; but I may mention, once for all, that after a full Sabbath service, it is usually the middle of the week before I can do any work without a sense of weakness or suffering. And if you will pardon this foolishness, for I am anxious that you should pardon my failure in a duty which is one great glory of the fruitful Pastorate, I may add that if I do not spend the time in intercourse with you, I do not spend it in my own indulgence. I may confess that I have naturally other tastes besides the taste for theology, and had I dared, Jonah-like, to turn aside from the Christian ministry, there are other pursuits in which I might have more appropriately engaged; and till I came amongst you I did not take a final leave of these favourite studies and pleasant pastimes. But coming here, in order that I might give myself wholly to this work, I abandoned them for ever; and should there be a lover of letters or of science here, he will understand how hard it is to crucify that love; how hard it is to abjure the pleasures of taste, and, in an opulent age like this, to make up one's mind to a life-long fast of knowledge. Dear friends, I am ashamed to mention these things, but I should be sorry that you thought it listlessness or secondary pursuits which made me so rare a visitant.

These are my three sorrows,—our constant separations, my own shortcomings in pastoral superintendence, and the partial success of the Gospel amongst us; and I might now try to enumerate that multitude of mercies which these seven years have brought us as a pastor and a people, but lest some root of self-complacency should spring up and spoil the acknowledgment, I forbear. Suffice it to say, that it is goodness and mercy which have carried us hitherto; and now, my dear hearers and friends, this day, in His Word and Providence, God calls us anew to devote ourselves to His service.

You who are Elders and Office-bearers of this Church, I know how cheerfully, and for how many years, some of you have given your strength and time to the Lord's service amidst this people. To discharge your many duties needs more sacrifice and self-denial than perhaps is known to any save the members of your family, and I should not wonder though now and then some of you might feel worn and exhausted and wishful that others would take your place; but having laboured so long and had patience, and not fainted, keep up heart for a little longer. "Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." After twenty years of unbroken fellowship, Death has come into the midst of us, and our Senior Deacon is called away. Those poor neighbours to whom he so kindly ministered will miss him. This place, which knew him so well, and now knows him no more, will miss him long. His family and friends, who always knew to find

him in his house, and who found him always so cheerful, cordial, and consistent there, will miss him sorely; and we who have been so long familiar with his inoffensive presence and modest piety, should miss him solemnly, and hear from that tomb, round which we stood last Monday, a voice saying, "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye know not the Son of Man cometh." And you who are Visitors and Sabbath-school Teachers, a like occurrence has made the present season a Shechem—a place for serious retrospects and holy resolution to you. Clothed with such humility as to make her presence almost imperceptible—so meek and diffident that she would fain have lived in no other eye except theirs whose souls she loved and His whose glory she sought, few of you knew her; but in that lowly disciple, oh how much prayer has ceased, and how much our children and this Church have lost! Dear fellow-labourers, let the summons which called her in the short twinkling of a midsummer night from the bosom of her family and the engagements of time away to the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb—let that summons be heard in the Sabbath-School, and cause all the lamps to be trimmed, and all the loins to be girded there.

SERMON X.

SHECHEM; OR THE TURNING-POINT.

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."—JOSH. XXIV. 14, 15.

LAST Sabbath evening we stated the occasion on which these words were originally spoken; and then and this morning we endeavoured to explain the duty enforced. This evening we shall conclude that explanation, and urge on yourselves Joshua's wise and holy decision.

In order to serve the Lord it is requisite to have right views of His character, and to be reconciled to His Person. We are by nature God's enemies, and in order to become His servants, He invites us first to become His friends and children. We must "fear" Him as a Father, in order to serve Him properly as our Lord and Master. When I say "right views of His character," I mean views derived from neither a guilty conscience, nor from a presumptuous and petulant fancy, but views derived from God's own revelation of Himself. A guilty

conscience sees nothing but gloom in Jehovah's countenance, and hears nothing but wrath in Jehovah's voice. It knows Him only as the God to whom vengeance belongeth, and hears him perpetually pronouncing, "Cursed is every one that—." And a petulant fancy ascribes to the Most High such attributes alone as suit its own wilfulness or wishes; divesting Him of truth and holiness, as the easiest way to take the terror from His threatenings, and the consuming glory from His throne: ascribing to the great "I AM" that medley of kindness without righteousness, and mercy without veracity, and softness without sanctity, which would not lend graciousness or dignity to the character of a mere fellow-mortal. To which I must add, the kindred error of a shallow piety. There are some who have really glimpsed that soul-reviving truth, "God in Christ reconciling sinners to Himself"—some who, we doubt not, have really been brought nigh through the blood of the Covenant—but it would seem as if in the relief of pardon they had forgotten that God is still their Judge and their Lawgiver, and in the joy of His mercy it would almost look as if they had lost sight of His majesty. It is not perfect love which has cast out slavish fear; but it is petulance or flippancy which has in them cast out holy awe. Now, my beloved hearers, it will decide the whole tenor of your piety, the aspect in which you learn to view this God whom you seek to serve. If yours be Christianity at all, it is to God in Christ that you must turn your eye—a God so holy that the heavens are not clean in His sight—a God so true that the universe shall pass away rather than a

word which He has spoken—a God so mighty, that a glance of His eye can make that mountain smoke, or kindle a present hell in that sinner's polluted soul,—all this, and yet a God so mysteriously loving that He could not lose sight of our guilty world after it had lost itself—so munificently gracious that He gave for its salvation His only begotten Son—so majestically tender, that whilst He refuses to relinquish one atom of His holiness, rather than that no redeemed sinners should get to glory He was content that through sweat and blood and sorrow, through the Cross and through the Tomb, the Son of his Bosom should fetch them thither. He is a holy God, one who will not wink at transgression or sin; and yet a gracious God,—one at whose right hand, if any man sin, is Jesus Christ the righteous. And to blend these features of sin-hating purity with pity for the sinner—to get such a view of God in Christ as shall cast out fear and yet not awaken presumption—to behold Immanuel Himself, so full of gentle assurance, and yet so resplendent with spotless sanctity—

> "Sweet majesty and awful grace
> Sit smiling on His brow;
> Whilst all the adoring hosts above,
> At humble distance bow,"—

to be so fully persuaded of His propitiousness and tenderness and sympathy, and withal so mindful of His sanctity and heart-searching Omniscience, would be Scriptural Theology, and a Divinely-tempered piety. It would dispel the gloom of the convict, and the forwardness of the pert intruder. It would beget the reverential reli-

ance of the child, and the docility of the humble disciple. It would be the right mood for serving the Lord; trustful yet lowly; assured yet vigilant; loving yet devout; mindful of His grace, but not forgetful of His majesty.

We have said—

1. Be reconciled to God.

2. Distinctly and deliberately devote yourselves to His service.

3. Lead a life of daily devotion.

4. Renounce besetting sins.

5. Make the Lord's service your study.

And let me hope, my dear friends, that some of you share the spirit of Joshua, and of those Israelites at Shechem. Let me trust that some of you are desirous of entering on a life of self-consecration, and systematic persevering obedience to God. Then, in addition to the hints already offered, I may add a few others—although it is impossible to condense into one or two discourses the whole of Practical Piety.

6. Sanctify the Lord in your common calling. In the days of Joshua there were few outlets for holy zeal. There was no Bible to circulate, no Gospel to publish among all nations then. In Palestine there were no ragged scholars, for there was little of that vice and profligacy which are the great manufactory of our modern rags; and there were no Sabbath Schools, for every Jewish householder commanded his children after him, so that they knew the Lord. And as there were few openings for philanthropy, it was through the channel of common life that piety and personal consecration flowed. And in

the good days which followed Joshua, you might have read on the face of a thriving country, "A people near to God." The nation's heart was right, and religion lived in everything. It grew in Asher's dainty fields, and flowed in Judah's purple vats. It dug the ore from Joseph's ancient mountains, and spread the sail and pulled the oar in Zebulon's ship-haven. And it was not so much that there were festivals of spring-time and harvest—psalms for the sower and psalms for the reaper, but seed-time, with its cheerful toil and looking-up, and harvest with its gratitude and joy, were a general anthem —a busy working psalm. Yes, Holiness to the Lord was inscribed on every lintel, and looked forth at every lattice; was inwrought in every homely garb, and shone the motto at every frugal meal; opened the shutters at each early dawn, and closed in for the night each cheerful and contented home. And so, my dear friends, to be consummate in our callings we would need to serve the Lord. That religion is not real which is not universal, and which does not claim for its dominion daily life and common duties. To serve the Lord in sincerity and truth, we must serve Him in those posts of occupation He has assigned us here below. The merchant must serve Him in the way he transacts his business, and the merchant's clerk in the way he keeps his employer's books and watches for his employer's interest. The scholar must serve the Lord in the intensity with which he applies his mind, and in the thoroughness with which he conquers his subject or achieves his task; and the domestic servant in the cheerful speed and featly

skill with which he performs his master's bidding. The working man must serve the Lord by striving to be the most accomplished in all his craft—the fastest, the most solid, the most finished hand in all that field of labour; and the man who undertakes a learned profession should grudge no study and spare no pains, till he has reached professional optimism, and made it every man's interest who wants the best assistance or the best advice, to take it from the Christian physician, the Christian lawyer, or the Christian teacher. Our true life is our daily life. Our Sabbaths and our hours of worship are mere fragments of existence, and unless their infusion fills our other time —unless the first day sabbatize the following six, and the hour of devotion hallow the hours of work—ours will after all be a carnal existence; and the more devout our sacred seasons, if they do not sanctify our secular employments, in our piebald profession the brilliant patch will only strike a stranger contrast with the broader and dingy ground. Aquila was still an evangelist, and Paul an apostle, when plying the tent-maker's needle. David was serving the Lord as sincerely and truly when tending the ewes as when guiding and feeding the realm of Israel. And to pass to the example highest and most holy of all,—the world's Redeemer was still about His Father's business when subject to His parents and handling the tools of the carpenter; even as He was about that business when preaching the Sermon on the Mount, and whilst giving commandment to His disciples before He was taken from them into heaven. Dear friends, remember this to-morrow, and see if you can be more reli-

gious in your common calling. If given you by God, and pursued for God, you may make the most common calling a *holy calling.*

7. Serve the Lord in your family.

Those of you who are heads of houses have a great deal in your power, and consequently a very solemn and perilous duty on you; and you cannot serve the Lord without trying to get your house to serve Him also. There is an ancient institution which has fallen of late into general abeyance. I mean *family government.* It was God's commendation of Abraham: "I know Abraham, that he will *command* his children and his household after him, and they will keep the way of the Lord." And when the Psalmist was furnishing his abode he said, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." You know how mild and generous was Abraham's temper; but you observe how authoritative was his patriarchal sway: he *commanded* his children and his household after him, and constrained them to keep the way of the Lord. No doubt they had every allurement to piety in his own mellow sanctity and winsome walk; but if these had failed he would not have left them to do as they pleased. He would have compelled them to keep away from bad companions; and when he pitched his tent and builded his altar, if Ishmael, for instance, had preferred roaming in the fields or racing with the kids.

his father would not have excused his attendance. And, wild as was the boy, he was all the better for the patriarch's authoritative teaching; for though four thousand years had passed away, his descendants still keep some of those ways of the Lord which Abraham commanded to their restless and unruly ancestor. And we know how gentle and forbearing was David's spirit; but still you see how strict were the rules of his household government. Resolving to watch over his own conduct first, he resolves to be peremptory and intolerant with all sorts of evil. He would have no graceless visitors. "I will not know a wicked person." He would not have worthless characters; however genteel or clever or agreeable, he would not have people of loose principle or flagitious conduct coming about the house; and within the house he would suffer none to tarry who indulged in open sin. "Him that hath a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer. He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." But we fear that this patriarchal control is greatly slackened now, and that little pains is taken to secure domestic piety. In selecting servants few are anxious to secure such as are fellow-disciples "and partakers of the benefit;" and such servants as they have, may take no thought about their souls: do nothing to secure their attendance on the house of God, and nothing to recommend religion. And children are too often suffered to follow their own devices. Absence from family worship or from the sanctuary is too easily excused, and sinful habits are too readily palliated or forgiven. Is it not a rare thing to meet the *commander* of a household?—one who rules it in

the fear of God, and governs it in the name and on the behalf of God? Do you not sometimes meet with the *tyrant* of a household, one who rules his children and servants, not according to the command of God, but according to his own caprice—one who has not at heart the welfare of his children's souls, nor the glory of God in the ordering of his affairs, but whose temper is his Bible and his arm his argument? And do you not sometimes meet the *victim* of a household? a parent in subjection to his children? a householder governed by his house? a father coaxed or wearied into concessions which his conscience blames? a domestic ruler who can never persevere in one course of policy, nor be long victorious in the perpetual civil war? Such things are as disastrous as they are unseemly; and no master of a house can rightly serve the Lord without endeavouring to exemplify what Joshua resolved. In such an effort each pious parent and each godly householder may count on the blessing and the help of God. It is He himself who has planted the Earth in families, and to a certain extent made the head of every family His own vicegerent. In dealing with such a problematic and such a disordered thing as human nature, there is constant risk of disappointment and self-defeat. But even that uncertain and untoward element is completely within the Lord's control, and by taking your hand in His, He can give you its effectual management. Where the eye is single the whole body fills with light; and when parents seek for their children singly the kingdom of heaven, it is amazing what powerful expedients present themselves, and what light irradi-

ates the path of parental policy. And just as you would have the full enjoyment of your hearth, just as you would convert your home into a nursery for heaven, just as you would keep out the most cruel thorn of all from your dying pillow, just as you would encounter the judgment-day in that most blessed attitude of all, encompassed by a loving circle still unbroken, "Lord, here am I, and the children which Thou hast given me;" just as you would escape Eli's curse and inherit Abraham's blessing, I beseech you to decide as Joshua did, and spare no prayers, no persuasions, no pains and no *authority* in carrying out the purpose, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Bring your children betimes to the sanctuary. Seek to endear to them the House of God; and seek to encircle with reverence and delight the day of God. Store their memories with holy texts, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Teach them to be loving and generous to one another, and promptly obedient to you. Seek to fill their minds with veneration for God and abhorrence of sin; and tell them what they can understand of the Gospel story. The great Ruler of the universe, God Himself, is Light and is Love. And in trying to rule your household, let His light shine in your sincerity, and His love be transparent even in your exercise of authority. And thus glorifying God in your calling, and serving him with a perfect heart in your household, however lowly your lot, and however hard your toils, you will drink the blessings of the upper and the nether springs. You will know of a Fountain sealed in the workshop, and

another in the Sanctuary, and another by your own fireside. As a Transatlantic bard has sung the pious blacksmith :—

"His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His face is like the tan ;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys ;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice
Singing in Paradise !
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies ;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes ;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close ;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose."

8. Finally, if you are in earnest about salvation, if you are resting on the atonement, if you are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, if you are resolved to lead a religious life, you must make a public profession.

We read in the Gospels of one who was for a time a disciple of Jesus secretly; and many might wish to be secret disciples. And some may think that as religion is

mainly a business betwixt God and the soul, there it may remain, and there is no need for blazing abroad the matter. And there are some things which you are not required to reveal. Your private communion with God, the outpourings of your soul in prayer, seasons of inward refreshing from the presence of the Lord; your personal experience no one has a right to demand, and you are not compelled to divulge.

> "Nor were it wise, nor should I choose,
> Such secrets to declare,
> Like precious wines, their taste they lose
> Exposed to open air."

But there is one thing regarding which you are not left at liberty. Discipleship—faith in Jesus Christ and devotedness to Him. This is not a matter regarding which you are left at liberty. Just as it is not left optional[1] to a person who wishes to enjoy the privileges of a British subject whether he will avow his loyalty or not; he must make a declaration or oath of allegiance. And just as it will not do for a man to say, "I am willing to be a soldier and fight for the Queen, but I will not wear her uniform, nor take the military vow," so it will not do for a man to say, "I am willing to be a citizen of the Christian Church, I am prepared to be a soldier of Jesus Christ, but I won't enlist; I will make no profession." In the nature of things it cannot be, and the Saviour has not left it optional. It is His object to extend His kingdom by the open profession and consistent lives of His subjects; and though, in the present state of our world,

[1] Hodge, 234.

just as in a period of civil strife, when a loyal citizen is exposed to great reproach and hazard—though it is impossible to make a frank and final avowal of attachment to Jesus Christ without incurring opposition and obloquy and perhaps serious loss, still the Lord Jesus has left us no alternative. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

If, therefore, you are fully persuaded in your own mind that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners, if it is to Him you are looking for the salvation of your soul, and if you feel so moved by His excellence, and so melted by His love, that you are prepared to devote yourself to His service, you must do it openly. It needs some courage; but be not ashamed of the testimony of Jesus Christ. Through far greater shame he passed for you. Be not afraid to join His Church, and avow yourself His thankful disciple. And be not deterred by idle fears of future inconsistency. Of all inconsistency, your present is the most egregious. You say to yourself,

or you say to a few chosen friends, that you believe in Jesus, and hope to be saved by Him, and yet you act as if you did not at all believe His repeated sayings—Him that confesseth me will I confess; him that denieth me will I deny. You think that you can do more for your own consistency than the Saviour can. You hope to wear the garb of victory without ever having worn the warrior's uniform; and without ever having touched the cross you somehow hope to win the crown. You say, What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits? And when the Lord answers, Take the cup of salvation, and pay your vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people, you go away sorrowful, for you are not prepared for that profession.

With much diffidence in myself, but with much confidence in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, I would make the declaration of Joshua my own: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And to you my beloved flock, I put in turn the alternative, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Some of you have been led to choose that better part which shall never be taken from you: and to all the rest I would say with utmost urgency,—"Choose this day."

Children, make your choice. You have bad hearts, and have done many wicked things already. But for His dear Son's sake God is willing to pardon all the past, and adopt you into His own family. He bids you carry all your naughty thoughts and evil words, and cast them into the fountain opened for sin; and if you "lay your sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God," Jesus will take away

these sins, and for Jesus' sake God will love you. And dear young friends, Jesus says, "Little children, come to me;"—will you not answer, "Lord, we come, we come," and leap into that loving Saviour's arms?

Young men, choose you. Like Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness, many of you have been serving other gods. Perhaps some of you have been the slaves of divers lusts and passions, and many of you have been the slaves of Satan, led captive by him at his will. This evening the Son of God goes forth into Satan's realm, recruiting for soldiers of the cross: and will you not give in your names? Will you not enlist beneath the azure banner, bathed in brightest heaven, and, breaking the bondage of corruption, join the winning side in that great combat which the Prince of Peace is waging with the kingdom of darkness and depravity? I speak unto young men, because the Lord this night gives you an opportunity of overcoming "the wicked one." Whilst the book is open, will you not give in your name? Choose this day whom you will serve; but if from love of gaiety, or fear of taunting comrades, or from the fearful force of some conscience-searing and soul-destroying sin, you refuse Him who this night speaks to you from heaven, oh! how will you curse your folly and marvel at your madness, when this choice can be made no more! When you hear the trump of judgment, and unwelcome life thrills through your awaking dust; when the grave can no longer keep you, and the rocks refuse to cover you; when amid the pomp of the mustering assize, and in the nearer blaze of the great white throne, you are over-

whelmed with reviving guilt, and see trooping round you those ghastly sins and ancient crimes which were never cancelled in atoning blood; when early in the morning of that dread day you seek a Saviour but cannot find Him; when you discover that the Gospel is gone back to heaven, and that on earth grace reigns no longer,—oh! how it will cut you to the heart to think how different it might all have been! "I had my choice, and I chose perdition. In yonder life I chose my good things, and now I am tormented." And to feel that the Saviour Himself has looked His last look of compassion at you, and that after neglecting one great salvation, the universe knows of no other, and for your infatuation to be overwhelmed with shame and everlasting contempt, oh! how it will crush and confound you! Oh! how shalt thou say, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!" And how shalt thou mourn at the last, and mourn through all eternity!

And young women, choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Some of you are at present the servants of fashion and frivolity. Some of you are serving the world. But the Saviour asks your service. And do you not answer, "Truly, Lord, I am thy handmaid." Do you not feel drawn, like the Marys and Marthas of Gospel story, to devote yourselves to Jesus Christ? On His behalf I say to each of you, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and forget thy former ways. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy God, and worship thou him." His Holy Spirit will adorn you with graces far

brighter than coronets of gold and sparkling gems, and which will retain their lustre long after the jewels of this globe are melted in the fervent heat. And then at last when the Lord sends for you, with gladness and rejoicing shall you be brought, and shall enter into the palace of the King.

SERMON XI.

BALM IN GILEAD.

"Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"—JER. VIII. 22.

WHEN you have visited a resort of invalids—when you have spent a few days in some sheltered cove or sunny nook on the Southern coast, where the weak and the drooping from all over the realm seek their winter refuge, your first emotion was sadness and pity. When you saw so many stooping frames, so many thin and hollow cheeks, so many a hectic flush, so many a wasted form, you had first a gloomy and sepulchral sensation as of one surrounded by the living dead. But when you got better acquainted with individual groups—when you had somewhat analysed the crowd and could recognise them one by one, your feelings grew more personal and tender. You could read a story, a real and affecting story, in every case. You saw the widowed mother waiting on her dying son; you saw the stricken wife leaning on her husband's arm; you saw the sisters in the garb of mourning, tending one the other, but could scarcely say which would be the earliest sacrifice; and you saw some poor solitary, stepping

short-winded, and bent together, often seated lonely on the sea-side bench, knowing nobody, and seeking to know none, but sure to be waiting at the letter-window whenever the post came in; and you marked the progress of decay. You saw the staff or the friendly arm exchanged for the easier chariot, and that again for the gravelled path and the wheeling chair; and some bright afternoon you saw the languid figure lifted gently indoors, and a fortnight after the shutters were closed and mutes were at the gate, and your poor neighbour was going to his long home. And often as you gazed on these spectacles of sorrow, and especially when you observed how intense in the sufferers the life-craving had become—when you noticed how much more interesting and beautiful to them this earth shone out than to their sturdy neighbours, or perhaps once was to their healthy selves—when you have seen with what delicate affection these pale fingers culled the snow-drop or the winter rose, or with what concentrated brightness, diamond-wise, these eyes beamed out upon some glory glimpsed in the ocean or the clouds,—and then when you thought how youthful were most of these drooping ones, you inwardly exclaimed, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Is there no antidote to this cruel malady? Can nothing be done to save from death so many that are lovely, talented, bright with hope, the treasures of their several spheres? Oh for one hour of that Great Physician, who once and again cleared whole villages in Galilee of all their sick, and whose healing Word could now send back the scholar to his books, the teacher to his charge, the mother to her home!

But whilst you were thus gazing, a disinterested but compassionate spectator, suppose that you were finding some strange sensations in yourself—that you found your strength had vanished, and, wearied with night-watchings and pain and fever, you consulted some skilled physician, and he told you that you were suffering under the national malady, and that it must now be a question not of recovery, but of nearer or remoter dissolution,—oh how it would alter all your views, and what a sudden value life would gain from this awful certainty of losing it! And if again, whilst you were setting your house in order, whilst you were writing letters to those friends whose face you could not see again, and finishing that more urgent work for which the scantling of life sufficed, and pensively making up your mind to die—if at that very crisis word came that the remedy was found; that it had been tried and proved triumphantly; that even in the last and lowest stages it was as sure to succeed, and prospered as signally, as in the first and faintest commencement, how thankful you would be for this boon from Heaven! How speedily you would take advantage of it, how grateful would you be for living till it was discovered and propounded, and how it would almost reconcile you to bygone weeks of pain and melancholy that you had now the contrast of recovery, the comfort and the joy of convalescence!

Sin is the consumption not of the body, but of the soul, and without seeking to establish any curious analogies, but supposing that you were a mere neutral visitor, a mere unconcerned spectator of this world, you would

find all its inhabitants labouring under a disease which has these characteristics.

1. It has its seat in the very citadel of life. Some distempers give us little uneasiness, for, however painful, they are superficial. Once you are a little older, or a little stronger, you will throw them off. But sin is deep in all the soul. The mind is enmity against God, so unsound that it is not subject to God's law, neither indeed can be; and it is an affecting thought, that from the hour when he was born the unconverted sinner has hardly ever felt one right emotion Godward. There has never been one breath of free and cordial and filial devotion, never the pulse of spontaneous unforced loyalty, never one hour of simple genuine piety. The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint, and instead of tending towards self-cure, each day makes the earthliness more intense, the carnality more complete.

2. It is a hereditary disease. This man has it now that he is old. He had it when a little child; he never was without it. His parents had it before him, and theirs before them. It is in the race, inveterate, a cleaving curse, a rankling virus. Each one is "shapen in sin," and with the dawning intelligence of each, sin is what first develops.

3. It is a fatal disease. It has as good as taken the life of the soul already, and when it has run its course it will infallibly end in the second death. It has no tendency to arrest itself, and there never has been an instance where it stopped spontaneously, and of its own accord passed away. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is the verdict of God, and it is also the nature of things. "The

wages of sin is death," and the moment that a sin is detected in a soul, there is the lurid bud from which the black blossom of death must sooner or later expand. And so far from there being any vigour in the natural constitution able to surmount its virulence, or cast forth its venom, the more robust the faculties, the more fervid the emotions, the more resolute the will, the more impetuous the passions, there is usually the more material on which sin may work its havoc, and over which the destructive process may conduct its triumphs, till of those remaining instincts by which it is attached to the great Life-Fountain of the Universe, till of those dim cravings by which it still betokens some love of excellence, the last fibre decays, the last filament dissolves, and in the outer darkness that lost soul is buried from the sight of God for ever.

4. And yet it is a flattering disease. Very seldom does the sinner feel as if he were labouring under a deadly distemper. With symptoms so slight, with sensations so tranquil, with experiences often so elevated and happy, he deems it impossible that he can be labouring under a mortal malady. He sometimes finds himself not so strong as he could wish,—there are feats of virtue to which he is not equal,—he cannot long persist in a course of self-culture and self-control—but that ominous symptom, that *moral inability* gives him small concern. And although for those ordinances and sayings of God which others deem the food of the soul, he has not the smallest relish ; though the Word of God is not near so interesting as are scores of human books ; though

prayer is an imposition rather than a privilege; though the Sabbath is more weariful than welcome; though he has every token of a soul from which the vital element has vanished, and to which the Living God is no longer the Chiefest Joy,—this indevotion, this absence of all spiritual appetite, does not make him uneasy. He is buoyed up by his own hectic fancies. He lulls his conscience by figuring for himself a Deity without justice, a paradise without holiness; and should any qualm or fear flit over him, he bustles it away, and tries to excite himself into high spirits and self-complacency once more.

5. Nevertheless, in many instances, it proves an acute and agonizing disease. There is a fret and irritation in many sins. The man who is the slave of some lust or passion is often exasperated at his tyrant—indignant at himself. The man who is wasting his substance in riotous living will sometimes be seized with terrible compunctions, and when he sees Poverty like an armed man standing sentry at that door from which Comfort and Respectability and Friendship have all absconded, he will be mad at his own madness. And the prodigal who bursting through parental remonstrance, or skulking away from under watchful and affectionate eyes, escapes to some scene of boisterous frivolity, or carries through some plan of wayward indulgence, when feeding on the husks of regret or clothed in the garments of contempt, is likely to come almost, if not entirely, to his right mind. And sometimes a deeper consciousness comes over the worldling. He sees that after all his existence is Godless.

Cleaving to his character, he sees a long series of sins and transgressions. His heart feels hollow. No sufficient motive—no worthy Sovereign can he there discover. Because of his iniquities God's hand lies heavy on him, and in the confused dejected feelings of such a season he is ready to exclaim,—"There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin." There is no health in us.

Gilead was a hilly region across the Jordan. Through fifty generations it was famed for its plantation of aromatic and medicinal herbs. Among these the most famous was its Balsam. It was a lowly tree,—little better than a shrub, with scanty foliage and inconspicuous flowers. Looking at it, you would scarcely have thought it profitable for any purpose,—for shade, for beauty, or for fruit. But on wounding its stem there flowed a pellucid gum, which was carefully collected, and was considered of all the substances known to pharmacy the most sovereign and wonderful. So early as the days of Joseph, this Balm was an object of commerce, and was carried down from Gilead to Egypt. In the days of Solomon the gardens where it grew were annexed to the Crown, and became an item in the royal revenue. So precious were they deemed, that in the days of the Roman invasion a battle was fought for their possession; and among the other symbols of victory which Vespasian carried to Rome,—a Balsam Tree was borne through the streets in triumphal procession. But being an exotic, and being from that period entirely neglected, it has perished from the face of Palestine, and there is no Balm in Gilead now.

In this chapter the Prophet foretells the judgments coming on the Jews from their Chaldean conquerors. He shows how there had been reprieves and respites granted by God, but how these had not resulted in repentance. And then in figurative language he asks, "Is there no remedy? Is the case of Judah incurable?" If it were a bodily ailment something might be done. There is balm in Gilead, and there are noted physicians there. But for this idolatrous insanity,—this self-feeding and ever-relapsing distemper; for this revolting from Jehovah, this moral epidemic, this spiritual malady,—is there no specific, no antidote, no balm? And looking at the disease we have just described,—looking at that deep and swift decline in which so many souls are dying, we may with equal force inquire,—Is the case foregone? This soul-destroying plague, must it run its course? or is there any cure? Is there no balsam, no physician who can arrest its ravages, and restore the spirit's health, before it die the second death?

Blessed be God, there is. The Gospel guides us to Gilead. It bids us go up and gather its balm; it reminds us of its great Physician, and invites us to carry to Him our sin-sick souls, and prove His skill, and reveals Him to us by that ancient name of His, Jehovah-Rophi, The Lord the Healer.

Perhaps you may dislike it as too fanciful, but by way of helping younger understandings and feebler memories, I may point out a few analogies between Judah's Balsam and that better Balm which heals the wounds of sin,—the anguish of the soul.

1. As we said, there was no great show about the Tree itself. It had no particular grandeur nor beauty. Most people would have been apt to pass it by, and would rather have expected such a wonderful elixir to flow from some beautiful flower of the field, or some stately prince of the forest. And so with the Saviour. Even whilst here below He had no outward form or comeliness, and though He was indeed the Son of God and able to save their souls, many people who were seeking pardon for their sins saw nothing attractive in Him, and passed onwards. They passed by *Jesus*, and still went on in search of *the Saviour*. And so is it to this hour. The sermons that tell about the Saviour are not near so beautiful—not near so entertaining or amusing—as some of the books you may read at home. And the texts which tell about Him,—except to the eyes and ears of anxious sinners, they have no particular majesty nor splendour. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."—These sentences are not so musical in their wording as many which mortal bards have penned; and yet they contain a joyful sound which has thrilled the souls of thousands, and bid their glory wake—their immortal life begin. Yes, my dear friends, if you would profit by the Balm of Gilead, you must be content with the Tree on which it grows. You must not hanker after a Gospel more picturesque or poetical than the plain but truthful story, "God so loved the world." You must not insist on a Revelation more sublime or philosophical than

the faithful saying, " Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If your conscience be really tender, that saying will be balm; and if that saying feel like balm, your health will soon be restored again.

2. The Balm Tree was a stranger in Palestine. Though it grew on Mount Gilead, it was not a native there. It had come from a still sunnier clime, and, as we said, there is no balm in Gilead now. The Saviour was a stranger in our world. To Him there was a constant chill in its godless atmosphere, and He was glad when the time came round, and He went back to the Father, and back to that bright world where there is neither grief nor sin. And this foolish world little knew what all He brought. It little suspected what a depth of Deity that lowly form enclosed. It little guessed what a mighty purpose that marred and downcast visage covered. As it looked contemptuously at the dry root of Nazareth, it little dreamed into what a sudden Shechinah that night-flower would blossom, and how Tabor would swim and be giddy with the tints and the perfume of Paradise. But within His quiet walk and under His meek unnoticed aspect, the Saviour cherished a gracious and wonderful design, and, in that lowly life of His, Incarnate Deity was silently elaborating the merit which should make that design effectual and infallible. Obeying, loving, praying, glorifying God and gladdening the abodes of men, magnifying the holy law, fulfilling every righteousness, He did all that the sinner's surety could, and fully prepared for that conclusive act which should purchase eternal redemption for us.

3. In order to obtain its healing essence, they used to wound the Balsam Tree. And in order to give forth in one conclusive act the merit of His life, the Saviour's side was pierced. He was obedient unto death. He poured out His blood, and made His soul an offering for sin. And as the main element in sin's expiation, and as the crowning and most signal fact in His long obedience, the blood of Jesus Christ is often spoken of as the purchase-price of redemption and the antidote of sin. "Ye are redeemed, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." And no wonder; for it is "holy," "innocent,"—like Him in whose heart it circulated, "separate from sin." It is dear to God, for it is the blood of His beloved Son. And it is mighty to save, for He who shed it is Jehovah's fellow. But peace-speaking, soul-cleansing, sin-annihilating as it is, let us never forget the hours of agony which from the suffering Saviour wrung this blessed Balm—the fires of Gethsemane in which the first drops exuded, and the cruel wounds on Calvary which bade the full current flow.

The holy life and atoning death of Immanuel are the Balm of Salvation; and it is by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, that the Divine Physician applies them to the soul. He takes the things of Christ and shows them to the soul. He is the Spirit of Life, and heals those who are dying of their hurt, nay, even those who are dead in trespasses and sins. And the usual method in which He conducts the cure is first to apprise the sinner of his

lost condition. And this He does, not for the poor purpose of agitating and alarming him, but in order that he may not rest till his deadly hurt is healed, and in order that when it is healed he may have the more thankful and adoring views of that specific which wrought his restoration. And then.—usually conveyed in some Gospel promise or Bible text,—he applies the purchased antidote. And just as the wounded traveller felt mild comfort flowing through all his frame when that good Samaritan poured over each bruise and gash his wine and oil; just as Naaman wondered at himself when, emerging from the Jordan, he found that he had carried from its tide organs sound and healthy,—when he questioned every aching joint and tortured nerve and found them tranquil and elastic with energy—so when a stricken penitent, a convicted sinner, is induced to try God's remedy; when, "Come, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet;" "This is the record—and the Spirit and the Bride say, Come;" when taking one of these texts he says, "I will doubt, I will cavil, no more," and suffers the Saviour's kind assurances to suffuse their gentle sincerity over all his soul, like the wounded traveller, who could tell that some soothing elixir had mollified his wounds ere ever he opened his eyes on the friendly hand which held the healing flask,—like Naaman, who recognised a second youth before he had time to study all the process of his cure,—so the man who in simple faith employs God's antidote will find the disquiet of his heart converted into love and praise and thankfulness,—a new heart given him, and a right spirit put

within him before he well can think of that kind Physician who has given him this unexpected convalescence. It was God's truth in the hand of God's Spirit,—it was the Gospel applied by the Holy Ghost,—it was the Balm of Gilead administered by the great Physician; and the result is health, peace, joy. The dark foreboding has disappeared. The second death is abolished. The smart and anguish of conviction are succeeded by serenity of conscience and quiet assurance, for God is reconciled. The sluggish and servile feeling, the aversion to spiritual exercises, is exchanged for prompt alacrity and filial gaiety; for mourning is turned to dancing, and he who was clothed in sackcloth is girt with gladness.

SERMON XII.

THE BRUISED REED.

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."—ISAIAH XLII. 3.

OF all the plants mentioned in Scripture perhaps the reed was the most obscure and inconspicuous—at first sight, of all herbs the weakest and most worthless. The vine, the palm, the pomegranate yielded delicious fruit; the pine, the oak, the cedar were invaluable for their solid timber; and though the rose and the lily yielded no fruit, and could not be cut into timber, they owed a special endearment to their lovely tints and exquisite perfume. But this poor waif of the wilderness was bereft of every attraction. No one saw any beauty in its russet plume; no one would have tried to rub a morning meal from its chaffy husks, or to rear his cottage from its frail and hollow stems. And instead of growing in picturesque localities,—instead of mooring its roots in the sides of Lebanon, or tossing healthfully in the breezes which sported and frolicked over the hills of Galilee,—like a recluse or a reprobate it sought the miry places, and grew in those oozy solitudes where fevers lurk and

the foul air rises. So that for uselessness and ungainliness it became a perfect proverb; and of all errands it was the idlest to go out into the wilderness to see "a reed shaking in the wind."

But not only was it thus obscure and valueless, it was peculiarly obnoxious to mischances. Not only was it slim and fragile, but it grew where Behemoth loved to plunge and wallow, and as he rolled his ponderous flanks upon the miry quag, he flattened whole battalions of these feeble reeds. And with that love of mischief which is a little minor development of man's malignity,—the wayfarer as he passed, or the schoolboy as he played, had it been a stalk of corn, or the stem of some lovely flower,—perhaps he might have spared it; but when he saw that it was only a crushed reed, a broken wind-straw, with his relentless stick he switched away the drooping head, and fairly broke "the bruised reed."

And yet, abject and homely as it looked, that reed was not so mean but that a skilful hand could turn it to good account. The stronger sorts were converted into that measuring-rod or mete-yard of which we read so frequently; or they furnished the light but serviceable staff on which the traveller leaned, or with which Bartimeus, old and blind, would grope his way. And the more slender sorts supplied with their appropriate weapons the warrior and the scribe. Shaped into arrows they filled the archer's quiver, or sang from the strings of Jonathan; and shaped into the writer's pen, a little sheaf was always suspended in the scholar's girdle, and if that scholar were a man of God, a Moses, a Daniel,

or a John, the reed which erst shook in the wilderness would be consigning to immortal leaves the mind of Inspiration.

And here we read of one whose heart is as kind as His hand is skilful. As we have already hinted, there is a sort of ruthlessness inherent in the human mind. When it sees anything feeble or afflicted, it is apt to help forward the affliction; and how often have you seen the youth, as he whistled through the fields, slashing off the heads of the wild-flowers, and if there were one whose stem was crushed, just as if weakness were a crime, he was sure to sever it entirely, and dash its fragments to the dust. But here is one the very converse, one whose whole career is full of *gentle power*. For though so mighty that nothing can obstruct the progress of His purposes, so mighty that earth's remotest isles shall recognise His supremacy, He is as remarkable for His benignity as He is for His prowess. Without raising those shouts by which warriors were wont to announce their presence and intimidate their adversaries,—full of God's Spirit He shall calmly carry every post and conquer all opposition. But so far from sharing that fierce and domineering spirit by which human strength is so oft distinguished, He will be at least as mild as He is mighty. Nay, in virtue of His serene and holy consciousness of power, He will be kept from those ebullitions of fury which in man are so frequently the effects of baffled spite, the effusions of vindictive weakness. Nay, alike infinite in goodness and in power, in dealing with moral agents His goodness is His power.

It is by kindness that He conquers. It is by cherishing the smoking flax till it burst into flame that with knowledge of Himself He lightens every land, and by cementing and healing the bruised reed that He fashions those sharp arrows, those polished shafts by which he subdues the nations under Him.

The lesson which this passage teaches is, that the Saviour is infinite in kindness. And I would apply it to three classes of persons in the hope that God may bless it.

1. And first of all, some of you may have had dull feelings from thinking that you were too *inconsiderable* for the Saviour's notice. You could understand how He might possibly find an object of interest in a seraph, in Gabriel or some celestial spirit, but you cannot imagine how He could find leisure to notice or love to expend upon you. You could imagine how His eye might be arrested and His affections drawn forth by the Rose of Sharon or the Cedar of Lebanon, but not by a dingy weed among the millions of its meagre fellows—one reed in the marshy thicket—one reed in the lonely wilderness!

Now, this is a chief glory of the Saviour. No littleness can evade His eye; no multitude of objects can divide His heart. Like His Heavenly Father, He can note the flight of every sparrow and number the hairs of every head. And in that forest of reeds He can take account of every blade that grows as easily as He can reckon the angels in each legion, or the stars in the host

of heaven. "Why are ye so fearful then? O ye of little faith? Are ye not of more value than many sparrows? Are ye not of more value than many spires of grass?" But that is not the right way to think of human nature. It is the right way to remember that your own is the very nature which Immanuel wore, the very nature which still He wears. So far as you are human He is not ashamed to be called your brother; and so far as you have an immortal soul, He who best understands what immortality means, is pervaded by a profound and tender solicitude for all its deathless interests.

Dear hearer, it would not make it easier for the Saviour to do it, but it might make it easier for yourself to understand it, if you would try to imagine yourself in the earth alone. You have read a sublime ode in which the poet sketches "the Last Man." Try to conceive yourself that man, and think how in that case the Bible would be all your own. Perhaps it would render more vivid your relation to the first father and your responsibility for his sin, when you realized yourself as Adam's only child. At all events, it would be more difficult for you to evade the Gospel when you were the individual on whom all its invitations and promises concentered. You would then be obliged to do, what perhaps at present you are loath to do,—you would be obliged to accept the Gospel as a personal message. If you believed in God's providence at all you would be compelled to receive the whole as intended for you in particular, as there is no one else in the planet to whom it can possibly apply. And in your

singular circumstances all the collective and general appeals with which the Bible abounds would condense into a direct and individual address. It would no longer read, "Come unto me, all ye," but "Come unto me, thou, such a one, who art heavy-laden, and I will give thee rest." And the Gospel would assume a character of like precision: "God gave his only begotten Son, that if *such a one* believed he should not perish, but should have eternal life." And if, crediting that Gospel, believing on that Saviour, and seeking in Him the rest of your soul, then all the promises would be to you as pointed and as special as if the Saviour had presented you with a Bible in which your own name was filled in instead of the names of all believers generally. "Lo, I am with *thee* alway, and will be with thee till the world is ended." "Whatsoever *thou* shalt ask the Father in my name, He will give it thee. In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for *thee*, and I will come again and receive thee to myself." And all the language of love and endearment which the Saviour addresses to disciples generally, you would be warranted in taking home in all its entirety to yourself alone. But this is exactly what you ought to do at present. To the Saviour's comprehensive eye you stand out as distinct and as isolated as if you were the last survivor of the race, the sole possessor of the planet: and in dealing with Bible sayings, and with that Saviour-God who speaks there, your wisdom is to take all the warning or all the comfort as if it had been prepared for your private use, or

had been whispered from the Upper Sanctuary into your solitary ear. Though all the rest of Adam's family were annihilated, you would not be more conspicuous to the Saviour's omniscient survey than you this moment are; and though the whole Church of the Redeemed were resolving into your single person, although it were revealed from Heaven that you were the only sinner whom Messiah had in view when He saw the travail of His soul, and was satisfied, and would be the only sinner who should ever wash his robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, although you knew that the burden of the everlasting song must all be sustained by your unaided voice, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed *me*,"—you would not occupy towards the Saviour a relation more close and personal than, if you be a believer, you occupy already; nor would you fill a larger place in His capacious heart than you now may occupy as one of that multitude whom none can number.

My dear hearers, experimental religion mainly hinges on what I am saying now. Vagueness, generality, indefiniteness are human infirmities. Minuteness, precision, individuality are Divine perfections. To our limited conception only one object can be vividly present at once, and within our narrow bosoms only one friend can find room at any one moment of time. But it is our blessedness to have a Saviour who is God, and to His view every object in immensity can be as vividly present at once as if He had a separate eye for every several atom,

and in His heart every disciple on earth and every saint in heaven can live as entirely and as dearly as if He had a several soul for every individual friend. And though the coldness of unbelief may fail to realize it, and though a vain philosophy may ask, "How can such things be?"[1] yet grave it on your creed, and recall it to your daily memory, "O Saviour, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, and art acquainted with all my ways." And remember this, that however much earthly friends may be thinking about you, there is none who thinks so much as the Son of God. When He sees you sinning, He thinks, "Why will he die? Why will he spend his day of grace in gathering fuel for the everlasting fire?" When He sees you wretched and sin-wearied, He thinks, "How gladly would I receive him to my bosom, and give rest to his soul!" And though you may feel yourself uncared for and unbefriended, it is not so. If no man cares for your soul, the Saviour cares. And if some do care—if your parents, if your pastor, if your kindred care,—the Saviour cares more. And if on the day that you repent and turn to God, some here on earth shall rejoice, none of them will be so glad as your Friend in heaven. And if the guides of your youth should fail, if every human being should lose his interest in your spiritual welfare, though Christian brethren grow shy, and the church in which

[1] Reconcileable to reason. The perfection of physical laws is their generality, *e.g.* Gravitation. The perfection of the benevolent affections is their individuality, *e.g.* father, son, etc.

you were cradled should cast you off, there is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother, a Friend who, when the mother loses her compassion, still retains His love, and on the palms of whose hands your name is engraven to all eternity.

2. And just as this Saviour is omniscient, as the reed in the wilderness is not overlooked because it is obscure and inconspicuous,—"I am small and despised, yet the Lord thinketh on me,"—so we add, secondly, "He is gracious and gentle, and does not break the reed because it is bruised." "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Ah! my friends, however high we may hold our heads, we are all of us broken reeds. We have broken the covenant, we have broken the commandment, and our integrity, our uprightness, our rightness with God is broken. And it is well when the sinner becomes aware of his ruined condition, and recognises himself as a bruised reed. For this is just the mood of mind in which the Saviour longs to find us. He desires no sacrifice; he desires nothing so much as a broken spirit, and far from despising the broken and contrite heart, He heals it, and binds up its wounds (Ps. li., cxlvii. 3).

But it is not only guilt which bruises the reed. The believer is encompassed with infirmity. When Saul of Tarsus lay on the dusty road near Damascus, he was bruised, demolished, all but annihilated. And yet the Saviour healed him. He not only restored his soul, but selected him as a chosen implement for fulfilling His

will—created him the rod of His power, and commissioned him to carry Christ's name before kings and the Gentiles. But there was a bruising of another sort which the Lord saw needful for His servant. So highly honoured as an Apostle, and yet more highly honoured by exaltation to the third heavens, and naturally surcharged with an eager impetuous spirit, the Lord saw that a counterpoise was needful, and so He gave His servant a cross to carry. Lest it should sprout too rank and raise its head too high, the Lord suffered the reed to be bruised. "Lest he should be exalted above measure, there was given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him." And though the Apostle prayed three times for the removal of that affliction, for once his prayer was not granted. His wiser Lord assured him that it was needful; but to reconcile him to his lot, He at the same time added, "My grace is sufficient for thee." "The reed may be bruised, but I will keep it from breaking; the thorn may be sharp, but I will keep it from killing, and without it you cannot be the humble, dependent, close-cleaving disciple which I would have you to be." And, my dear friends, you will sometimes see a Christian who appears to combine every comfort of this life with the brightest prospects beyond. He is not in trouble like other men, nor plagued like others of God's people. But if you could come closer—if you knew the arcana of his condition, if he would be candid with himself and you—there would turn out to be a thorn in the flesh. You would find some joint at which the reed is bruised. Some

member of his family gives him uneasiness; some element of uncertainty in his worldly affairs fills him with frequent anxiety; some malady is slowly but surely maturing in his system; some dark cloud is continually crossing his mind; and though in his mercies he has the materials of constant thanksgiving, in this hidden pain or privation he has a perpetual reminder of his own frailty and dependence on All-sufficiency. But most gladly may he glory in such infirmities if thereby Christ's power rests upon him. And it does. It would seem as if even Omnipotence could not sanctify a fallen and sinful spirit without the employment of sorrow. It would seem that there is in every believer a certain dross which nothing except the furnace can dissipate—on every character certain stains which nothing but the sharp solvent, the severe corrosive of affliction, can expunge. But in applying these painful processes, oh how tender and sympathetic the Saviour is! He does not break the bruised reed. He apportions the trial to the exigency; and, mindful of the hour when He drank the Father's cup and an angel from heaven strengthened him, in handing to each disciple the cup of needful trial, His arm of omnipotent kindness encircles and supports the fatigued or fainting soul. And it is a glorious infirmity which thus brings into the spirit "the power of Christ."

Think of this, my friends. You who feel lonely in the earth, like reeds in the wilderness; you who feel timid and foreboding like a reed shaking in the wind; you who droop the head and are broken-hearted; you who are

crushed by some great calamity and borne down by your load of sorrow, like a reed snapped asunder and all but broken through, remember that the Saviour is the Man of sympathies. He does not willingly afflict, but He does *will* your sanctification. And all this affliction, this dulness and dejection, this nervousness, these low spirits, this indefinite dread of calamity, this incipient or incurable disease, this loss of money, this daily drudgery at which you grieve, this departure of a beloved friend for whom you mourn, this drawback on your social or domestic happiness, be it what it may, it is only the chastening hand of Jehovah-Rophi—the hand of that Saviour who bruises those reeds which He does not mean to cast into the oven and burn with unquenchable fire. We have now seen (1.) that though the reed is inconspicuous and obscure, it is not too lowly for the Saviour's all-surveying eye and far-stretching affection. And we have seen (2.) that the very thing which would move the contempt or bitterness of worldly men—the contrition and abasement of the bruised reed—is the circumstance which draws forth the Saviour's kindness and compassion. And now we add (3.) that the circumstance which seems fatal to its profitable employment is the circumstance which elicits His divine power and matchless skill. The reed is bruised, but He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have made it an implement of use, of beauty, or of majesty. That is,—

1. The sinner is obscure, but the Saviour is omniscient.

2. The sinner is a thing of grief and guilt, but the Saviour is gentleness and grace impersonate.

3. The sinner is in himself worthless, but the Saviour is mighty, and out of the most worthless can make a vessel of mercy meet for the Master's use.

In the days of His flesh the Saviour went out among the hills of Galilee, and He went into the wilderness of Judah; and there He found reeds shaking in the wind. He found a few peasants, plain, ignorant, incompetent, carnal and coarse-minded, a crop as unattractive and unpromising as ever tried the patience of Infinite Love or the resources of Infinite Power. But still the Saviour set His heart upon them. He chose them out, and commenced His transforming process on them; and, notwithstanding their refractoriness, He did not fail nor get discouraged, till—Whence came those pens, so nimble and so apt, with which the Holy Spirit wrote the things which Jesus began to do and to teach until the day that He was taken up? That one so steady, broad, and clear in its Hebrew strokes? That other, so like "a feather from an angel's wing," so limpid, pure, and loving? And those arrows, in the Gospel's first crusade, so sharp in the heart of the king's enemies—those bolts of fire which subdued the people in Pentecostal hours,—what are they, and whence came they? Ah! these were reeds of the wilderness once—reeds growing on the edge of Gennesareth, shaking, shattered reeds; but passing by, Jesus set His love upon them. Dingy, He did not despise them; bruised, He did not break them; but by dint of His

divine painstaking He sharpened some into the pen of a ready writer; and, barbed with truth and winged with zeal, He polished others into shafts of celestial power. He did not fail nor get discouraged till, with pen and arrow forged from a bruised reed, He conquered the world; judgment was set on the earth, and the isles waited for His law.

SERMON XIII.

THE SMOKING FLAX.

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."—ISA. XLII. 3.
"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."—MATT. XII. 20.

YOU have often seen the smouldering tow which threatened to expire,—if the fresh current played on it, instantly it began to glow and brighten till it burst in flame; or the lamp blown out,—if forthwith plunged in the jar of vital air, it exploded in a volume of dazzling brilliance, and with its flood of illumination filled the chamber. The fibres of this plant have great retentiveness of fire, but it is often difficult to get the smoking flax to burn. The prophet had often seen the process. He had seen the shepherd-boy to the leeward of some rock in the winter weather, and with leaves and twigs and little fagots he had heaped his little hearth; and then to the pile, when thus prepared, he applied the fiery atom hoarded in that rag, and, as he fostered it betwixt his concave palms and urged it with his breath, the fiery atom crept along and lengthened into a brilliant line, till some withered leaf or wisp of hay began to smoke, and from the smoke there

darted a tongue of light, and as it leaped from twig to twig, and licked into its fervent vortex all the crackling brushwood, "Ha, ha! I am warm; I have seen the fire;" and amidst the evening shades the dwellers on the plain perceived blazing like a beacon on the hill above them the fire which the persevering conqueror at last had kindled.

Familiar and simple as it is, this fire-kindling process is one of the feats of human intelligence. Of all the earth's inhabitants, Man is the only one who has ingenuity and adroitness enough for it; and common as is the occurrence, it has always a certain amount of interest attached to it,—the tiny commencement, the first feeble flickerings, the apparent extinction, the revival, the struggle, the brave outburst and conclusive ignition, when the comfortless hearth is converted into a cheerful altar,—all these impart to this every-day and homely act a tinge of dramatic excitement, and not unfrequently it calls for a large expenditure of patience and perseverance. If the surrounding temperature is very low, if the materials are refractory, green branches from the growing tree or drift-wood from the drenching brine, or if the enkindling spark be faint and evanescent, it needs great skill, great resolution, and great through-going to bring forth the first feeble incandescence into final victory.

The first reference of this passage is to Christ's cause *in the world.* "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him. I have placed at his disposal all the resources of the omnipotent and sanctifying Spirit;

and even throughout the pagan realms he shall insure the eventual triumph of *judgment* or righteousness. And this ascendency of goodness in the earth, he shall effect by no violent nor forceful measures. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. But full of tenderness, the bruised reed shall he not break; and full of patience and holy purpose, the smoking flax shall he not quench: and by this mild and gentle management he shall win for the true religion a world-wide victory. He shall not fail till that root out of a dry ground —that bruised reed, has become a mighty tree, beneath whose shadowing branches all nations repose; he shall not be discouraged till that dying spark, that smoking flax, has become a bonfire on the mountain-tops, and a jubilant world shouts back to its beacon-blaze. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles wait for his law."

And thus interpreted, the passage is full of inspiration to each Christian philanthropist. Christ's cause—the cause of virtuous happiness here on earth, and of glory to God in the highest—this cause, amidst its seeming feebleness, is Divinely secure. Look back to the beginning. When the Lord Jesus left the earth, He left the Gospel like a smoking flax. There was no more of it in the world than what smouldered dimly in the minds of 120 men and women, confused, illiterate, aimless people, each too dark to enlighten one the other. But for ten days the Lord kept the spark alive, and when Pentecost was fully come, the breath of the Holy Spirit urged those feeble embers into a surprising flame, and by the sudden

light the disciples learned who their Master was, and what they themselves should do. The Atonement was revealed as a completed fact, and the Gospel quickened into a vital power, and it filled man's being, like the celestial force it really was; and for three centuries the flame then kindled shed more or less its radiance throughout the Roman Empire. And when a foul air issuing from the bottomless pit had quenched that fire,—when the golden candlesticks were upset, and the iron hoof of persecution had nearly trampled into annihilation the last spark twinkling in Waldensian vales,—the Lord revived His work. He took the soul of a Saxon monk and made it tinder. With hot convictions he seared the conscience of Martin Luther. The green tree,—the sturdy youthful spirit, its moisture was converted into the drought of summer; and when, like touchwood or a pine-torch baked in the oven, when that mind had grown bibulous of fire celestial, the Lord brought together this prepared spirit, and the still-surviving spark of truth, and forthwith Europe was in flame.

But the same principle pervades the Lord's dealing with each individual soul. In the case of each vessel of mercy, the Saviour's great object is "to bring forth judgment or righteousness unto truth." He longs to make His redeemed holy in heart and life. For this He possesses a resistless and unfailing agency in the Holy Spirit. "I have put my Spirit upon him." And in effecting this He is daunted by no dulness, disheartened by no remissness on the part of His people. He shall not fail nor be discouraged. And in the hope that it may awaken in

your minds sympathy with the Saviour—that it may excite some to be fellow-workers with Him in this great matter of their personal sanctification, I shall mention a few particulars.

Doctrine.—The entire eventual Holiness of His people, *i.e.*, their perfection in knowledge, faith, and goodness, is the Saviour's steadfast purpose; and in carrying out that purpose He exerts an unwearying and "victorious" patience.

Particular I. KNOWLEDGE.—It were a very idle inquiry to ask, How little knowledge would suffice to the saving of a soul? but we know that in point of fact the first knowledge of some Christians has been very scanty. There was Philip,—"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" And there was Apollos, who twenty years after the ascension of Christ was preaching no other doctrine than that which had been preached by the Baptist. And there were the disciples at Ephesus, who had never so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And even if we could find a believer whose creed is exempt from error, we should still have long to look before we found another whose theology is free from deficiency,—whose knowledge is as comprehensive as it is correct, and which combines the extent with the exactness of the Bible revelation.

If those of you, my friends, who have any clear acquaintance with Christianity would think over it, you will likely find that the best of your knowledge came flashing on your view in brilliant fragments,—that the best and dearest of your knowledge is that which burst

upon your mind in sudden splendour, like a lamp unexpectedly lighted in a dark place. Once on a time, for instance, Christ was to you nothing but a name; but at last, perhaps in some musing moment, in the reading of a Gospel, or in the meditative leisure of a Sabbath evening, this name started up a Living Person. Haloed round with a mild benevolence, aloof from humanity in his God-like goodness, but studiously intermingling with it in acts of gentlest kindness, you saw pacing the fields of Galilee the Son of Mary in all His winsome sanctity, or ascending from Olivet, the Son of God, in a glory which still looked brotherly; and from that time forward when the word "Christ, Jesus, Saviour," is spoken in your ear, it is no longer a sound, a symbol, but it at once suggests a person dear and living,—one who to your spirit's eye stands forth in majestic friendliness and holy beauty. Or once on a time, in orthodox phrase—nay, in God's own words you recited it, "the gift of God is eternal life,"—but it never occurred to you that this gift is really a gratuity or present. You used to have in your mind some perverse notion that it is a gift which needs to be earned, and that in order to get it the glorious Giver must still be somehow or other propitiated. But when at last it was revealed to you that of all gratuities the most absolute is the one which is infinite,—when you perceived that of all donations the most free and unfettered is the one which is least deserved,—when you saw that a fond father does not give to his darling child the birthday present more cordially than in Christ a Holy God bestows on the guilty rebel salvation,—when you saw that, like

any other present, this gift of salvation only needs acceptance in order to be actually yours, and that, like the gratuity which some munificent Prince sends to a disloyal subject, and which may reach him either in a rebellious or a relenting mood, but which is that subject's personal property the moment his hands close over it,—when you saw this pure gratuitousness, this Divine and heart-healing freeness with which the Most High proffers pardon, renovation, heaven, you were startled with amazement at the Gift unspeakable, and were next astonished at your long obtuseness. And so, whatever be that bright and starry truth which has beamed upon you from the Bible firmament,—Is it the truth that there is not a prayer but God hears it? Is it the truth that there is not a place but God fills it, not a motive but God inspects it? Is it the truth that every act of believing obedience is a sacrifice well-pleasing to God through Jesus Christ? Be it what it may, perhaps you can recall the time when that doctrine which is now the pole-star of your piety, the most frequent and influential presence in your faith, first burst upon your joyful perception, and shone into your spirit, a self-evident and Divine reality.

But the thing which I am most anxious to bring out at present is, that such knowledge was present in your mind beforehand. Before it became a truth it existed as a truism. You had probably said it by rote long before you realized it. It was a smoking flax before it became a burning lamp—a dead tenet before it kindled into a morning star. In answering questions of the Catechism, or reading over Bible texts, you were in daily contact

with these doctrines, but they were hidden from your eyes. Like Philip with his Master, they had been long time with you, nay, long within you, and yet you never knew them. And had not the Holy Spirit brought them out in something of their native brilliancy, you would never, with any clearness or comfort, have known them. And if so, may there not be thousands of truths in the same predicament—truths which are revealed in the Bible, but still veiled from your view—truths which to you as yet do not shine, but smoke? And if so, if this be the case with believers somewhat enlightened, should it not be encouragement to you who dare hardly speak of yourselves as believers at all, who prefer the safer and more specific name of inquirers? If you are truly desirous of firm faith and soul-cheering realizations, it should be your comfort that you transact with One who is willing to impart them. He does not despise your present earnestness because it is mixed with much error, nor is He disdainful of your present knowledge because it is only confusion. Unless you yourselves quench the smoking flax, it is not in His nature to do it; and if so, what more fitting exercise for us all than to read the Bible on bended knees, praying for illumination in the presence of that Shechinah which has already shone into so many? O send forth Thy light and truth; that which I know not teach Thou me. O God of our Lord Jesus, Father of glory, give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the

saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards them that believe.

Particular II. FAITH.—And so in regard to Faith. Like Abraham's, the faith of some is strong from the outset; like the Apostles', the faith of others is so weak in its commencement, that it is only affection which keeps it alive. In the case of some, like that inflammable air which, the moment light is applied, flashes into a bright and steady flame; in the case of others, a smoking flax, a sluggish wick, which, long after it is kindled, burns so slowly that it only reveals the surrounding darkness, or rather its own dimness. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." One of the strongest expressions of faith which we have lately encountered was that of a physician who lately died: "Christ is mine! He has promised; will He not be faithful? Then I am safe. Christians have doubts and fears because they look to themselves. I don't look to myself. I am a mass of corruption, but I REVEL in the Atonement. I cannot doubt."[1] And that exulting assurance was the attainment of a man who, not many months before, had been so full of doubts and queries, that by some he was regarded as little better than an infidel; but far from being a malignant infidel, he was a reluctant doubter and a resolute inquirer. And so, should there be here present one person of sound mind who has not yet reached a firm faith, but who can honestly aver that such a faith he would prize above all possessions, then to him I say, Fear not, my brother. I cannot deny that these doubts are sinful; but neither can I deny that

[1] Life of Dr. Gordon of Hull, p. 173.

this desirousness, this craving after a settled creed, is a spark of the Spirit's enkindling. And just as the Gospel is true, and as the Saviour lives, if you be sincere you will yet arrive at a plenary persuasion that these things are so; if you be a Nathanael—genuine, guileless—you will yet be forced to exclaim, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Men, yes, Christian men, may have no sympathy with your perplexities, and may scowl on your carnal reasonings, and, in their indignation at your doubts, may disdain your wistfulness; but far from putting an abrupt extinguisher on this smoking flax, the patient Saviour knows your frame. Cry to Him. Like him of old who knew that everything hinged on believing, and who also knew that none could impart the faith save Him who demands it, cry, "Lord, help mine unbelief;" and one by one your difficulties will disappear, and, slowly at first, more swiftly afterwards, your faith will "grow exceedingly." Timid and tempest-tossed as you at present are, you may yet "revel in the atonement;" and apprehensive as you now are that your final portion must be with the fearful and unbelievers, you may live to rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Give diligence to the full assurance of faith, for you *shall* know, if you follow on to know the Lord.

Particular III. LOVE AND OBEDIENCE.—These we put together, for together they constitute true holiness, and it is as they lead to holiness that Knowledge and Faith are so important. God's truth is precious, because its proper end is to sanctify. "Sanctify them through Thy truth;" and the Saviour's blood is precious, because its

proper effect is to cleanse from all sin, to wash and make white the robes of redeemed ones. And the moment we forget that the end of Atonement is the production of Virtue and Piety in the place of Vice and Ungodliness, the moment we forget that the Saviour died in order to purchase out of a wicked world a people zealous of good works, the moment we forget that holiness in His people is the object for which Immanuel travailed, and that departure from all iniquity is the sure proof that in naming the name of Jesus we are not mere professors,—the moment we forget these things, we turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and treat as if it were an unholy thing the blood of God's own Son.

Be this then engraven on every mind. The object on which the Saviour's heart is set is His people's sanctification. And this so being, what a power of superhuman patience, and omnipotent perseverance does it need to foster in each soul the smoking flax! Everything is adverse. In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Grace in the soul is like a slow match applied to moist or incombustible materials. It is long before it tells at all, and when it does reach its destination—like a brand introduced amidst green or brine-drenched fagots, steaming and hissing and sputtering, you are sure it must at last expire. And just as you may often have felt that there is something more chilling in a newly-kindled fire than in a hearth dark and emberless; so, in some respects, incipient piety has less prepossession than the respectability of summer-day worldlings. So demure, so downcast, sometimes so extreme and ascetic, often so cen-

sorious, often too so inconsistent, denouncing a thing to-day and doing it to-morrow, you will sometimes hear people allege that piety has spoiled the man, that he was really more amiable and engaging before he set up for so religious. And if this be the case with human onlookers, how much more with Him who looketh at the heart! In the new convert or the hopeful inquirer, how dark is the dawning light! how cold the commencing warmth! What smoky prayers!—one earnest petition, and then a thousand wandering thoughts! What smoky faith!—a joyful sight of the Saviour's sufficiency, and then a long season of inward complacency occasioned by that sight! Self-righteous efforts to extirpate self-righteousness, and most legal endeavours to elaborate faith! What smoky affections!—gleams of love to God, followed by long intervals of estrangement!—spurts of self-sacrifice, followed by systematic worldliness! Fits of fury against some besetting sin, followed by abject surrender to its power! Ah, brethren, if the Saviour were human, He would set His foot on this fuming profession; He would extinguish this smoking flax.

But that is not the way with Him. He does not despise the day of small things; He does not scorn these smouldering commencements of grace. And though this spark celestial is amidst materials so unpropitious, though the world pours cold water on it, and Satan blows upon it with the choke-damp of temptation, the mephitic air of hell, the Saviour is as patient as He is all-powerful, and will by no means forsake the work of His own hands. In its struggles after holiness He sustains the weak soul

inwardly; and by the breath of His Spirit fanning, and with drops of excellent oil refreshing, that particle of heavenly fire, He brings forth judgment unto victory. Gradually grace triumphs over nature. Gospel truth grows clearer, the Saviour more precious, the Divine perfections more lustrous, more glorious, more dear. With a trust more intelligent the soul rests on the work which Immanuel finished, and with an affection more uniform looks up to God as its Father in Heaven. With zeal for the Most High there mingles good-will to man, and as religion becomes more and more his second nature—the holy habit of his soul—his piety is at once more philanthropic, and his benevolence more devout than they were in the beginning. And instead of fits of orthodoxy followed by fits of charity, and fits of spirituality followed by fits of secular conformity, and fits of liberality followed by fits of stinginess,—his knowledge is warmed by love; his conversation in the world is marked by simplicity and godly sincerity; his frugality and his offerings alike are the varied expressions of one Living Sacrifice. Instead of jets of flame dying out in a long sequel of smoke, his religion is now perennial—a lamp that burneth; and through the infinite resources and exhaustless patience of a Saviour Sanctifier, the smoking flax is now a burning and shining light, and past all risk of quenching.

Uses.—Few subjects can apply so extensively and yet so closely as this; for amongst those who hope that they have some interest in religion, you will venture to say that it has got much beyond the smoking flax. When you think of your knowledge so confused, your faith so

fluctuating, your love so cold, your profession so dull and dying-like, you say, Here is my emblem :—this smouldering flax, this smoking firebrand. But if so few subjects can be so cheering to those who set any value on religion, and who are longing to possess that piety which will bring their minds into unison with God's mind now, and which will fit them for God's presence hereafter, in awful ignorance or more awful impiety many fancy that the main obstacle to their salvation is God. They think that if it depended on themselves they would be saved; but in God's sovereignty, or in God's purpose, or in God's holiness, they perceive a great obstruction. They have read their Bible backwards; they have looked at the Divine character through an inverting lens. Did they know the Scriptures, they would know that the great obstacle to the sinner's salvation is the sinner; they would see that the spark of grace is Divinely kindled wherever that spark is found, and that if the sinner does not quench it himself, the Saviour never will. And the two words of counsel which we would offer to those who are seeking salvation, are these :—Avoid what would quench, seek what would foster, the smoking flax.

Use 1. Avoid what would quench it. There are regions so very cold, the icy realms of everlasting winter, that it is hardly possible to get anything to ignite; of course impossible till the substance is raised to a certain temperature. And so is it with cold companions. I do not speak of the coarse and the vicious, but the cold and the lifeless. And many such there are, and these not always errorists, frigid professors, orthodox icicles, men who ex-

clude the affections from the business of piety, or men of such essential chilliness that those glad truths which in the Gospel descend like the warm rain from heaven, are instantly crystallized into rigid spiculæ, or hang in frosty stalactites round them. But still worse are corrupters and seducers, companions infidel and immoral, be they books or men. The spark may struggle on in hyperborean cold, but it will not live a moment in foul air. And if you find that your religion languishes when you go to live in a worldly family, or when your lot is cast in those wintry districts of our land where vital Christianity is extinct or rare, you will find that it perishes whenever you walk in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the way of sinners.

Use 2. When once a brand or wick is fairly lighted, its tendency is to aid its own incandescence and keep up its clearer shining. And so the grace which has already grown most, is likely to be most growthful; the piety which has become habitual will be not only permanent but progressive. Hence the first effort of each new convert should be to acquire really religious habits. When once a man has persevered for some time in daily devotion, when the sanctuary has become his natural and stated resort, when some favourite or familiar sin has been long under his foot, it is a mighty vantage for further and higher attainments. And, after all, should you perceive that the flax is only smoking, should you find no satisfaction in your Christian profession, then, like a foreign substance in the flame, most probably you will find that your spiritual enjoyment is marred by your own mis-

management—that it is interrupted by some sin, or obfuscated by carelessness and carnality. My dear friends, many lose "the blessedness they spake of," because they lose that tenderness of conscience and dread of displeasing God which distinguished the days of their pellucid piety and new-born sensitiveness. Put away then all malice and hypocrisy and evil-speaking—that disposition to brood over real or imagined wrongs, or to discuss in a censorious spirit, the conduct of others; put away lying, false appearances, and false professions; put away wrath and bitterness, vindictive feelings, and the pride from which they spring; put away, put off, the whole old man with his corrupt deeds, and you will find that the removal of this sin is itself strength to the light which was ready to die. But when all this is done you will still find that for a smoking flax there is no specific like heaven's oxygen; for a faint and flickering piety there is no cure comparable to the one without which all our own exertions are but an effort to light a lamp *in vacuo*—the breath of the Holy Spirit.

SERMON XIV.

THE FOUNTAIN OPENED.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."—ZECH. XIII. 1.

THERE is nothing more repulsive than physical impurity. It awakens our instant and insuperable aversion, and we say, "I do not blame the man for his poverty, for that is the appointment of Providence. I could get over his ruinous cottage and his ragged raiment, but I cannot brook the squalor of his person and the filth of his hovel." And this instinct pervades all our notions of things. With doating delight we contemplate the lambkin on the grassy lea; whilst we turn away from the sow wallowing in the mire. We love the swan floating in the silvery lake, or the swallow circling in the purer air; but we abhor the raven or the vulture as he coarsely revels at his carrion feast. And whilst we all admire the brilliant insect sailing through the sun-tide, we wish to forget the worm which gloats in darkness and amidst corruption holds its carnival.

And of this instinct the Bible's great Author has taken advantage. He employs it to indicate his abhorrence of sin. As much as if He said, "What is it from which you shrink back with the most instant abhorrence, the most

inveterate and insuperable revulsion? Then that is the feeling profound, instinctive, insuperable, with which I shrink back from sin. Moral impurity is to me as odious and intolerable as is physical defilement to you. Are there creatures which you call unclean? Then these are only an emblem of those viler, because sinful, natures which I call unclean. Do you dislike to see the sow wallowing in the mire? Then to me how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity like water? Do you turn away from that plague-stricken leper, and are you unable to conquer your disgust? Then holy angels and a holy God cannot look upon sin. They cannot help that abhorrence with which they regard it—that revulsion of spirit with which they deprecate its approach and drive it away."

But unhappily this moral defilement is wide-spread as the human race, and deep as human nature. And in order to find examples of it we need not go to prisons and penitentiaries. We need not dredge for it in the cess-pools to which the dregs of our species have subsided; but we shall find it in scenes of outward decorum; we shall find it in parlours and in palaces; we shall find it amongst the seemliest members of the most polished society; we shall find it, my friends, each one in our own soul. We shall find both the stain of guilt actually contracted, and the impure propensity which makes sin in some form the soul's defiling element.

And not to speak of the latter this morning, who can understand his errors? who can enumerate those stains of actual transgression which he has been daily contracting?

And though, my dear friends, it is difficult, though our pride revolts from such inquiries, and though memory be reluctant to supply the materials, unless we have some sense of sin we shall have no care for the Saviour; if we have no perception of our own uncleanness, we shall have no value for the Fountain opened.

Let us, then, this morning take in our hand the lantern of God's law, let us open those chambers of memory to which none but God and ourselves have access, let us descend into the vaults where lie the records of the past, the exuviæ of years departed, and let us see if up to the present hour our life has been a stainless story.

And penetrating to that lowliest and remotest chamber, where lie the relics of our childhood; that period of which so many speak as innocent, and of which we ourselves are apt to think so tenderly. And to do it justice, it was exempt from many an atrocity which marked maturer years, and in its bright and ardent hours was many an incident which may render the simple and ingenuous child the envy of the veteran sinner. But even in these days which, mellowed by the distance, look so guileless and so gay, was there nothing said or done which shrinks nearer scrutiny? No falsehood, no ferocity, no impiety? Does there rise on your recollection no word of insolence, no deed of disobedience by which you sent a pang to a mother's heart? No lie, ingenious and deliberate, by which you sought to escape a father's frown? Are you able to recall no truant hours when, at the cost of truth and duty, you sought a guilty pastime? No scene made sad by acts of fraud or purloining? Haunting you now

have you no deeds of boyish cruelty, when the youthful tormentor drank fiendish delight from the anguish of the helpless animal—from the gyrations of the insect impaled, or the protracted death-struggle of the drowning or wounded captive? And, beyond all, was not childhood "vanity"? Was it not a mournful mixture of hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and ungodliness?—a time when you said your prayers to please your parents, and for a little now and then tried to make yourself good in order to please God?—a time when brief moments of alarm were succeeded by long blanks of carelessness? and when in the heart of the young rebel strange thoughts rose, wishes that God were not so holy, so powerful, so all-seeing as He is? nay, that there were no God at all?

And then, coming up to these latest years, is there one so blameless that you can now review it without a sigh, or that this night before the bar of God you could confront it without panic or palpitation? No broken Sabbaths, no broken promises, no hearts that you have broken? Are you conscious of no malice, no envy, no hatred of another? Have you never been nettled by another's praise, provoked by his greater popularity, or begrudged at his worldly prosperity? Have you not been so impatient because another stood betwixt you and some promotion, or betwixt you and a sum of money, that you wished him dead—a heart-murderer? Have you not been idle in another's service, whilst busy in your own? Unfaithful to your trust, unfaithful to your friend? Have you not been angry and sinned? and in a towering passion have you not scattered the madman's firebrands?

And even with all the callousness of conscience, and with all the favouritism of partial memory, do there not start up so many omissions and offences—so much negligence and so much presumptuous sin, so many bad prayers, and so many evil practices; if not open profanity or open profligacy, still so much secret unbelief, and so much sanctioned self-indulgence—such clear knowledge of God's will, with such deliberate doing of the contrary, that, tried by God's pure standard, you must confess your duties have been a great short-coming, your life a long transgression?

Yes, brethren, feebly as we may put it, and sadly as we fail in making it palpable, in the eye of holy heaven, in God's view, our most obvious feature is sinfulness. Some rich and some poor, some clever and some cloddish, but all sinners, and always sinners, shapen in sin, born in sin, that cannot cease from sin; sinners against both tables of the holy law, sinners against God and one another—not only sin-defiled but sin-pervaded, with its polluting principle all imbued and saturated, or, in the Bible's emphatic words, "filthy flesh and filthy spirit."

And the pollution of sin being so pervasive, you will not wonder that nothing human can wash it away. Some have tried; and the fasts and flagellations of the Papist, and the streaming altars and the terrible self-tortures of the Pagan, will rise up and condemn many a Protestant who has never felt his guilt grievous enough to bestow one anxious hour about it. But still the blood of beasts and the tears of penitents can never purge away sins. The cattle on a thousand hills are no compensation

for the slightest insult offered to God's majestic law, nor from a whole material universe could the balsam be confected which would neutralize one moral evil. And although we allow that good works are merit, and that merit is atonement, where are the good works of the sinner, where is the merit of the man who, the more works he produces, is producing so many more sins? As soon might you wash the lazar clean by plunging him again in the kennel. As soon might you hope to bleach the rocks of Siddim white as snow by washing them with their own black bitumen, as hope to wash out sinful deeds with sinful deeds, old sins with new.

For, alas! till a man is born from above, sin is his essence; selfishness, ungodliness, runs through all his actions, gives its pestilent aroma to his prayers, its darkening tincture to his tears. And though he could bathe his youthful years in the waters of a weeping and repentant manhood, or embalm his former sins in the virtues of his later life, after all, it would only be an Ethiopian washed in ink, impurity purged with more impurity; and in regard to the abortive attempt, Jehovah would say, "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take ever so much soap, yet is thine iniquity marked before me, saith the Lord."

Nay, brethren, so ingrained is this defilement, so inveterate this corruption, that even the flames of hell cannot purge it away. Ah! my dear friends, this is a solemn subject, one to which I would not lightly allude, but one from which I must not always forbear. Some persons have indulged a desperate hope that the torments of perdition may accomplish that change which the

terrors of the Lord and the tenderness of the Gospel on earth have equally failed to achieve; and for the sake of millions lost, most eagerly would we say Amen, if we dared. Most greedily would we grasp at a theory which offers to convert the wide universe at last into one holy Elysium, and like the vineyards and the verdure clothing an extinct volcano, which undertakes to conjure up a smiling Paradise where the Lake of Fire once weltered. Vain illusion! frantic hope! contradicted by Scripture sayings the most express, and in direct contrariety to the nature of things! As if pain would propitiate towards an angry God those whom kindness could never reconcile to the God of Love! As if the undying worm would be a preacher more persuasive than pious parents and holy apostles, yea, and than the Saviour himself! As if the man who had successfully resisted the striving Spirit would at last, and that in hell, originate and consummate his own conversion! But alas! the assumption and the simile on which that hope is founded are alike fallacious. It is said that as fire refines the precious ore, as it purges the dross, and dissipates the impurity, till the silver come forth in fluent brightness, so will the fire purge away the sinner's dross, and brighten him at last into a Saint of God. But where is the silver? where is the holy element? In the soul to which the righteous Judge pronounces, "Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire," where is the saintly principle? It is just because there is no such principle that this awful sentence is pronounced, and because there is no saintly element that like seeks its like, and that he who is filthy remains

filthy still. And instead of silver purified, the truer simile would be sin detected, the counterfeit unveiled. For just as when you fling into the furnace the coin of cast-iron or clay, the film of gold or silver soon vanishes, and leaves nothing but the dark and drossy medal underneath; as when you cast into the fire the earthy image which was tricked out in tinsel robes and silken finery, the flame momentarily consumes the gossamer, and leaves nothing but the plaster idol; so these revealing fires from around the carnal mind burn up all vain disguises, consume the veil of hypocrisy, the film of outward decency, and leave in all its hardness and all its worthlessness, "the enmity against God." Oh no, my brethren; the same Scripture which reveals men gnawing their tongues for pain, speaks of them as blaspheming the God of Heaven; and if there be no tearful fountain which washes sin and uncleanness away, so neither is there any purgatorial fire which can destroy its strength and dissipate its stain.

And is there nothing that can be done with this terrible evil? is there no way to dispose of this hideous portent which floods of sorrow cannot drown, and flames of anguish cannot overcome? After it becomes an awful entity, after it has assumed the character of a terrific and heaven-registered reality, is there nothing that can be done with GUILT? with Sin's uncleanness?

In order to make amends for sin we require merit, goodness, a righteousness so prepollent that it shall countervail sins that are past and cancel their whole amount. And as we cannot come at such merit of our

own, as we can no more elaborate it from ourselves than the bitter spring can conjure up that pleasant element which is to neutralize its own bitterness, no more than midnight can manufacture that sun which is to dispel its own darkness, no more than the Ethiopian can make his right hand white by washing it with his dusky left; it comes to be a pressing question,—If there is no fountain within ourselves, is there one without? If we cannot make our own expiation, is there the expiation of any other by which we can benefit?

Look we then to Immanuel. And oh! my hearers, it is a thrice-told tale, but listen, and you may find in it materials for a new song. Listen, and beneath its accustomed cadence you may this day hear a joyful sound, the voice of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

Well, it was into this world, where the fountains were all sin and uncleanness,—each of them a Marah, each of them a pitchy spring casting up mire and dirt; it was into this world that Messiah came. And for a while He was a fountain sealed. Within His own bosom He carried the purity of Heaven, the calm consciousness of His own Divinity, a great deep of gentleness and love and compassion. But that was not enough. It was not enough that He should be a holy visitor, by His surpassing sanctity pronouncing a tacit verdict on the surrounding iniquity; an angelic tourist through the realms of earth, leaving them more wretched and lonely than before,—He had come not so much a visitor as a victim, not so much to sojourn as to save. Found in fashion as a man, God the Son became the kinsman of sinners, and engaged in His own

person to achieve an ample atonement for the sins of the world. And in order to make His merit quite complete, He courted every command, and with a compliance as loving as it was minute He fulfilled all righteousness, and showed how good each precept is when it has a good performer. And when there was no statute left which He had not obeyed,—no law which He had not magnified, when His sacred person had become a fountain as full of merit as it was full of Godhead,—He gave Himself an offering for Sin. In order that infinite guilt might have equal expiation, He assumed to His person that Sin which He could not imbibe into His soul. He that knew no sin was made a Sin for us, and by an act of peerless magnanimity the Holy One became in relation to His people the sin-bearing Saviour, in relation to His Father the curse-bearing Surety. In the presence of Gethsemane a few drops from the full fountain flowed over; but it was not till on Calvary He bore the wrath due to transgression, till He felt the Sword of Justice in His sinless soul, and looked in vain for the Father's face,—it was not till He had cried, "It is finished," and from His riven side the soldier's spear had fetched the blood and water; it was not till then that the fountain sealed of Incarnate Love became the fountain opened of Redeeming merit, and that the Siloah began to flow which ever since has flowed adown the Oracles of God. "In the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, was there opened a Fountain for sin and for uncleanness."

The first inhabitant of Jerusalem who washed in that Fountain was a Hebrew robber. He had lived a lawless

life, and a ruffian, and now in anguish and shame he was paying to the laws the last forfeit for his crimes. And up to that day he had braved it out the rude desperado and the bold outlaw, and found a wretched solace 'midst his pain in reviling the righteous Martyr: when of a sudden the Spirit of God revealed to him at once his crimes and his Redeemer: and about the time the sun was going down on Palestine, there hung with broken limbs and savage features on a gibbet outside of Jerusalem's gate a ghastly corpse, and there sped through the gate of Paradise a triumphant spirit, and as he took his station before the throne he sang a solo, which a multitude that none can number soon took up:—"Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed me to God by Thy blood." The first member of the New Testament Church, the first-fruits of the Fountain, he told the news in Heaven: the Fountain was flowing, and wondrous was its virtue, for in a moment it had made his spirit white as snow.

Then seven weeks passed on, and, a few rare stragglers excepted, the Fountain was unfrequented. But at last there came a day of power; Jerusalem was shaken, and its inhabitants flocked together; and as he saw before him a crowd of guilty men, some of them his Master's murderers, to their affrighted question, "What shall we do?" Peter answered instantly, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;" and that very afternoon there came to the Fountain three thousand men, and amidst the sins then

washed away, one was the sin of having slain the Lord of Glory.

And, not to notice other instances, years had passed away, during which thousands had arrived, and all with the same result,—this stream was instant cleansing,—when there came a peculiar pilgrim. Great contrast to the dying thief, cultured, polished, encased in faultless respectability, yet protesting that he was the chief of all the sinners who ever had been there—haunted by an unhappy memory of Christ's first martyr, and by all the fearful blasphemies he had uttered against this precious blood—the persecutor, the personal enemy of Jesus—the Pharisee who had determined to force an entrance to heaven by his own righteousness—came groping and staggering to the Fountain. He washed and was clean, and, as he withdrew, he proclaimed to all around how in him, the chief of sinners, Jesus had shown all long-suffering, for an encouragement to them who should hereafter believe. And to him was given the great privilege of being the chief instrument of breaking down the wall of partition and inviting to the Fountain Gentile sinners, not Jerusalem's inhabitants only, but the citizens of the promiscuous world.

And, my dear hearers, this Fountain is open still. Fresh, efficacious, and free as on the day when His mighty Sacrifice was offered, the merit of Immanuel still continues. I need not explain that this Fountain is not literal. It is not the water of Baptism; it is not the wine of the Lord's Supper; it is not the literal blood of the Saviour, for neither baptismal water nor sacramental wine can

wash away sin, nay, nor the actual blood of Christ, understood in a corporal or carnal sense. But the Fountain must be sought in the written Word—in the testimony which God gives concerning His Son—in such sayings as these,—"The blood (*i.e.* the atonement) of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "Come and let us reason together. God hath sent forth His Son, a propitiation for sin." This truth concerning Jesus, published in the Bible, is the Fountain opened to the world—the man who believes that truth is the man who has his sins washed away. And what I pray you to realize and remember is, that the Divine atonement of Jesus is of exhaustless value and unfading virtue, and is this moment as dear to God as the day when it first was finished. Do you this day make trial of its power. Believe God's Word, and be purified through its truth. Surrender to God's Son, and be saved by His God-glorifying satisfaction. Come to the Fountain, and be washed from your sin and your uncleanness.

When the muddy Arve joins the limpid Rhone, after a while the bright waters grow troubled, and at last they flow together a turbid stream. But it is not so with this Fountain. However many the sins, however much the defilement which it washes away, it springs pure and pellucid as ever, and the reason is, that this Fountain resembles the sea. Though a limited outlet, it is a boundless tide.

In its single opening, no larger than one text, one faithful saying, one wondrous fact, one wounded heart—in its abysmal fulness, it is mighty as the merit of

Immanuel—it is unfathomable as the love of God. And you have only to cast your life-long guilt, your ungodliness, your evil thoughts and wicked words, your sinful soul itself, into this crime-cancelling, sin-annihilating, soul-cleansing Fountain, in order to obliterate from God's creation your foul transgressions, and yet leave the Divine perfection fair as ever. The sin which a Saviour's blood dissolves is the only sin which, after being once committed, is totally extinguished, and the sinner whom it cleanses is the only child of Adam who, in innocence, like his unfallen progenitor, is prepared to start on the career of new obedience.

In Persia, says a legend,—in Persia was a fountain, and if any impurity were cast into it there was sure to be a storm the self-same day. But here is the very converse. Over the sinner's head are lowering the dark thunder-clouds of wrath Divine—a cloud on Jehovah's countenance, and its shadow, its counterpart, on the sinner's conscience. But, emboldened by God's own invitation, the sinner casts his sins into the Fountain opened, and the sky is clear; and though it may be a little while before his conscience, accustomed to gloom, is aware of its new gladness, from the moment that sin is transferred to the Saviour, God's anger is turned away, and, with a pleasant countenance, He beholds the believing and returning transgressor. And as there is not a moment's interval betwixt faith and acceptance, so there need be none betwixt acceptance and assurance.

In the Gospels we read of a fountain whose waters were effectual once a year, and effectual only to the first

who entered them. Once a year an angel troubled it, and the first sufferer who stepped into the troubled cistern was straightway healed. But the Fountain of which we speak needs no angel to agitate. The virtue never leaves it. The Gospel needs no new infusion to give it efficacy, for all the satisfaction of the Surety, and all the sincerity of the Godhead, are there already. The sacrifice of Immanuel is ample and abundant once for all, and every day of every year this Fountain stands open, free of access as ocean's brink, fresh-springing as the love of the Trinity. And all unlike Bethesda, where the instant one was healed the virtue vanished for a year, this Fountain is mighty enough to welcome a whole congregation to its waters, and it would not be baffled with the sins of the world. It is open to us all, and it invites us to-day.

"Had the prophet bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?" And, like Naaman the Syrian, are you angry at the Gospel's simplicity, and ready to go away "in a rage"? No, brethren, we dare not make the Gospel intricate, even to make it popular It is not a great thing which it bids you do—it is a great thing which it bids you get. Rely on Jesus and get reconciliation to God; rest on the promises and get pardon and peace; resort to the Atonement and get eternal life; wash and be clean. A small compliance and a vast result; for sin is not only a pollution, but a plague. Like Naaman's leprosy it is at once uncleanness and unsoundness—the defilement of the soul and its destruction. But just as when the proud Assyrian humbled himself—when

he forgot Abana and Pharpar and dipped in Jordan as directed, "his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and *he was clean.*" So the moment you forget your proud preconceptions as to the need of previous convictions or repentance—the moment you deal with the direct sayings of God and the immediate work of the Saviour—the moment that to the Spirit's voice, "Come to the water of life," you answer, "I come," and on Christ's mere merits cast your soul, whether you are instantly conscious of the change or not, you will be forthwith freed from sin and uncleanness. Born of water and of the Spirit, your flesh will come again like that of a little child, and you will be clean. That corruption, those desperate stains which the tears of contrition and the flames of hell cannot expunge, the blood of Jesus will cancel at once and for ever.

Beloved, you that have faith in the Fountain, *frequent it.* Beware of two errors which are very natural and very disastrous. Beware of thinking any sin too great for it; beware of thinking any sin too small. Beware of thinking any sin too great, for the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, even his sin who shed it,—even his sin who, like Saul, has blasphemed it,—even his who, like the Corinthian Church, has abused and profaned it. And—which is another form of the same error—beware of thinking any sin too recent. Have you ever been tempted to think, "I must wait"? "My transgression is terrible, because it is newly committed"? "I must tarry till time has assuaged it, till amendment and effort have intervened betwixt myself and its present enormity"? Ah, brethren, you may wait

ever so long, but if it was a great transgression on the day it was committed, it will be a great transgression on the day it is forgiven, and *as a great transgression* it will be washed away. Therefore, however fearful the crime, however awful the offence, you cannot rush to the Throne of Grace too soon, you cannot flee to the Fountain too fast. And beware of thinking any sin too small. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet;" and it is from this blessed truth perverted that many professors grow careless and carnal. They hope they have come to Christ, and that they are new creatures. They know that they are daily sinning and coming short, but they do not much disquiet themselves. It is merely dust upon "the feet," and may at any time be easily removed. And in this way they contract increasing defilement. "The iniquity of *their heels* compasses them about." Their garments are no longer clean; and by little encroachments their faith relapses to legality, and their rejoicing in Christ Jesus dwindles into fleshly confidence, and they lose the blessedness they spake of when first they believed. Oh brethren, there is not a sin so little but it may be the germ of everlasting perdition; there is not a sin so enormous but a drop of atoning blood will dissolve it as utterly as if it were drowned in the depths of the sea.

But, brethren, I tremble lest any of you should count this blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, a trivial or an irksome thing, and I must not run the risk of increasing your dislike by dwelling on the theme. Is it not the deceitfulness of sin, is it not an awful malignity

that drinks poison from the Source of Life? which hates the Son of God because He has shown Himself the Friend of sinners? And yet there is no other name by which ye can be saved; there is no other way to get rid of sin and uncleanness. But "ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life."

Nay, say some, we mean to go. We are glad to hear of this Fountain. We mean to visit it some day, but we cannot just at present. We must let these holidays be past. We must get over some ploys we have now in hand. Must you indeed? Would it not be wiser to say, I *must* get salvation? I *must* get my sins forgiven? I *must* have peace with God, and then — ? There are millions now in eternal misery who once planned and purposed as you are doing. They meant to seek salvation after they had secured some other things; and if you could ask them now, "How came you to this place of torment?" they might truly answer, "By trifling. By temporizing. We never meant to come here. We once had no more thought that we should ever be here than you now have. We knew of that Fountain. We passed it in coming here. Yes, we passed it full of good purposes; and now to us it is open no more. He that is filthy here must be filthy still." Oh, my hearers, this is the accepted time, this Sabbath is the day of salvation. Resort to the blessed Jesus this very day. He will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. From all your filthiness and all your idols will He cleanse you. A new heart also will He give you, and putting His Spirit within you, He will cause you to walk in His statutes.

SERMON XV.

THE SALT OF SOCIETY.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."—MATT. v. 13.

BEFORE the Saviour left the world He instituted the Christian Church. He joined His people together in a holy federation or society, sometimes called the Kingdom of God, sometimes the Household of Faith, but most frequently the Church of Christ. This great household or kingdom, this assembly or church, consists of all who are loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are renewed by the Sanctifying Spirit. And for its fuller organization and greater efficiency, its Founder has appointed so many ordinances and office-bearers. He has supplied it with a text-book of truths and a manual of conduct—the Bible. He has secured for it one day in every seven, when its members may have nothing else to do but worship God, and promote the spiritual progress of themselves and others. He has ordained frequent assemblies of its several inmates, for purposes of worship and edification, and He has appointed a few simple rites, by which the remembrance of vital truths may be kept alive and inten-

sified. And He has given pastors and teachers for the work of its ministry, to take charge of the Church's alumni, and perfect its saints, till they reach the stature of the fulness of Christ.

When we look at this Institution, we can easily see a twofold function it fulfils: one internal—to itself; another external—to the world.

1. Its primary function is one of self-conservation and self-culture—taking care of its own members, teaching, training, defending, and strengthening them, taking care of them till the Lord receives them home to Himself. In this way the Church is the asylum into which the sin-weary and guilt-laden retreat, and find in its holy services and its congenial society the atmosphere for which their awakened spirit craves. It is the nursery where feeble faith is cherished, and the sanatorium where spiritual diseases are healed. It is the gymnasium where the moral faculties are exercised, developed, and matured, the hospice or traveller's rest, where food convenient is supplied, till, advancing from strength to strength, each appears perfect before God in Zion.

2. But besides this, and beyond it, the Christian Commonwealth has a very important function in regard to those that are without. It has not only to foster and educate its own members, but it has to do God's work in the World. It has got God's truth to propagate, God's Spirit to transfuse. It has to act as the conscience of that world—its conqueror and assimilator also. It has got to spread both illumination and influence. Ye are the light of the world: ye are the salt of the earth. "To *be* good,

is to *do* good." Be you so full of God's truth as to witness for him wherever you go: be so full of His Spirit as to shed a holy prepossession on all who come near you.

To-day we would make some remarks on Christians as the Salt of the earth: *i.e.* on Christian Influence, Individual, Congregational, Collective.

The expression is figurative. There are substances popularly called salts, but really alkalis.

Salt is good. Never knowing what it is to want it, we can scarcely appreciate its value as a condiment; but in places like the African interior, where it cannot be obtained, health droops for want of it, and a handful of salt is a precious gift. Amongst the Jews it had a mystical value, for "every sacrifice was salted with salt;" and they used it moreover for a purpose for which it is sometimes employed even in English husbandry. In thin sprinklings scattered over the fields it destroyed grubs and snails, and on that calcareous soil it quickened the growth of grass and corn. But sometimes "the salt lost its savour." Blocks of it were quarried on the shores of the Dead Sea and brought to Jerusalem, and a store of this rock-salt was kept by the Levites in the Temple to be used in the sacrifices. It was very impure—usually containing a large mixture of sand, and in moist weather the saline ingredient, what the chemist would call the chloride of sodium, deliquesced, and trickling away left the porous lump in its original shape, but all its substance, all its "savour" gone. For food it was no longer fit seasoning. Cast on the altar it would no longer decrepitate and sparkle, and in flowers of flaming violet adorn and

consume the offering. Even the farmer did not care to get it. The gritty, gravelly mass was good for nothing,—only fit to be pounded and sprinkled on the slippery pavement, and trodden under the feet of men.

An apt emblem either of a gracious man or a Christian community. That individual or that society has in it a potent principle, a principle which may stimulate much excellence and educe much life in others. But if the principle be gone and only the profession remains,—if the salt has evaporated or melted away, and only the shape, the semblance, survives,—wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, be it the Christian or the Church. With its gracious principle gone, it is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men.

For the sake of clearness I shall ask your attention to only two forms of Christian influence.

1. The first is the influence of Christian conviction. The world's morality is more or less an expediency. The world seldom asks sincerely—Is such a thing right? Is it the will of God? But it asks, "How will it answer?" "Is it becoming?" "Will it pay?" And the number of persons is very small who tremble at the Word of God, and who having inquired at the oracle and ascertained God's mind say,—"*There* is an end of the matter." And yet when such God-fearing men come in contact with careless worldlings, five of them can put a hundred to flight. A small minority of sincere believers can restrain or overbear a multitude of Sadducees or scoffers; and just as in a workshop one man of genuine piety, one man who

really believes that the Lord will not hold guiltless whosoever taketh His name in vain, as that one God-fearing workman will be a restraint on many rash swearers and ribald talkers,—so in a community, just because they have truth, because they have right, because they have God upon their side. In a community which is not humane, a minority of Christians will carry the emancipation of its slaves. In a community which is not moral, a minority of Christians will carry the abolition of lotteries or the early closing of spirit-shops. So has God ordained it. There is a power, an impressiveness in moral conviction, which sooner or later countervails all considerations of self-interest or convenience; and if the Church only had faith in God, there is nothing which it might not do. Even as it is, the firm convictions of the Christian Church are the pillars of public virtue; and the Gospel is the salt of society, because that Church is the Conscience of the Community.

At this rate, one of the greatest services which a man can render Society is to believe the truths of God sincerely and maintain them steadfastly. It is the happiest state for a community when there exists within it a vigorous Christianity—a phalanx of strong minds fully persuaded as to the revealings and requirements of the Most High. Like the "willows by the water-courses," which are not only green themselves, but whose roots, penetrating and interlacing in the soft and spongy soil, prevent it from being swept away by the rushing torrent, those men of gentle manners but profound convictions are the living net-work, the rampart of roots unnoticed and unthanked,

who keep society from crumbling piecemeal into the gulf of licentiousness and atheism and crime which is for ever surging and foaming past it. Like the metallic clamps and rivets, the bands and girders, which, in a region of earthquakes, keep the precarious houses from tumbling to pieces, law and police and magistracy are a mere mud masonry, and but for the binding power of such conscience as pervades the community, but for the fastening force of their convictions who believe in God and in the great Hereafter, in the Ten Commandments, in the upheavings of man's passions, in the volcanic throes of his lust and violence, the framework of society would soon be shaken all to pieces. Like the fragments of iron in a mass of stone, which draw it towards the magnet, it is the "faith which he finds in the earth," which at any period draws the earth towards its Maker, or makes a community "a people near to God."

And if so, do not you perceive that the best contribution you can make to the nation's well-being, and by and bye to the well-being of the world, is to add something to the general conscience? Believe some truth so firmly, and maintain it so earnestly, as to impress it on the minds of others. Have salt in yourselves. Ascertain the will of God. Have your mind made up on the great questions of duty, and then you will be a salt to society. Your convictions will spread with the power of a holy contagion, and will tell on feebler faith like a strengthening stimulus. And you yourself will be another barrier betwixt society and that torrent of evil which is ever sapping its soft alluvium and undermining its verdure—another band of

union between the race and its Great Ruler, who recognises on earth just as many objects of complacency as He recognises minds in unison with His own.

2. I have spoken of the Salt of Sincerity. Let me now notice the Salt of Benevolence. I have tried to indicate the great good which the world derives from the presence of that diffusive conscience,—a believing Church; and now I would like to hint some of the advantages which the outside world derives from that universal comforter,—a beneficent Church. In other words, to complete the case, to the Church's *faith* we would add the Church's *friendliness.*

And by far the friendliest act in which either a Church or an individual can be instrumental is the salvation of a soul. When you realize the misery of an unconverted man, the gloom of alienation from God, and the ever-growing burden of his guilt—when you think of his predicament, as dreadful as it is wicked—when you reflect that there is already that within him which can only end in perdition, can any philanthropy be purer, any friendship nobler, than that which strives to snatch such victims from their self-destruction? Nor is there any which requires us to have more grace, more salt in ourselves. To deal with men about their souls lovingly and tenderly, to realize that wretchedness from which we try to save them, that blessedness to which we would fain allure them, to sympathize in God's hatred of sin and God's love of the sinner; to be suitably impressed with the preciousness of atoning blood and the shortness of the accepted time;—to attain views thus vivid, and yearnings

thus Divine, we had need to live very near to God. We had need to imbibe much of the Saviour's spirit, who did not more transcend all other teachers in His doctrine than He surpassed all the sons of men in kindness and compassion.

But supposing that the Lord has so far prospered your own efforts, or that He has allowed you to enter into the labours of other men who have been the means of awakening their neighbours, there is boundless scope for Christian patience and meekness and perseverance in maturing the character of those who, through grace, have been gathered in. There are some good men who lay their account with all sorts of iniquity in the careless, but who are stumbled at the least infirmity in a convert. They forget that it is one thing to be genuine and another thing to be perfect; they forget how much the Saviour had to tolerate in Philip and his companions the long time that He was with them; and they forget how the long-suffering Spirit of God has nearly as much to bear with in a believer newly converted, but almost wholly unsanctified, as in that elect soul in whom the awakening process is not yet begun. But, my dear friends, next to the conversion of careless sinners, we should long for the progress, the improvement, of real disciples. I am not sure but that the one is almost as rare as the other. Conversion is rare, but growth in grace is also rare. It is a rare thing to see a character perceptibly improving; it is a rare thing to see a Christian professor gaining victories, decisive and final, over the sins that beset him; it is a rare thing to see him become conspicuous for the grace which once he

wanted, or proverbial for exemption from his former faults and failings; it is a rare thing to see Boanerges soften down into the apostle of love; it is rare to see Saul the inquisitor transformed into the model of magnanimity and Christian tolerance; and even in their distinguishing excellences it is rare to see disciples advancing. It is rare to find the old disciple a marked improvement on the young disciple—the liberal Christian so much more liberal, the devout Christian so much more devout, that like those lamps which thaw their own oil, the longer they burn the brighter their path shines, clearer and clearer till it is lost in perfect day.

But if this result is rare, it is attainable, and it is anxiously to be laboured after. It is to be attained by the same instrumentality through which the salvation of souls is effected,—by a believing soul devoutly in contact with a holy God, and desirously in contact with the object of its benevolence. Love God and love that soul, and you will be made the vehicle of grace, the one medium of a blessing to it. And the reason why so many converts become stunted professors is, that those who were first the means of impressing or deciding them take so little pains to foster or cherish them. They forget to visit them; they cease to correspond with them; they forbear to pray for them; and when after the interval of months or years they see them again, they are mortified to find them so cold, so complaining, so dwindled or dead. Ah yes! ye are the salt of the earth, and if planted out on the bleak hill-side, and in such a meagre soil—if you neglected them, if you forgot to supply them with the

appropriate stimulus, can you wonder that they are scraggy scions, stunted trees ?

And speaking of the Church's friendliness, we must not forget its manifold Humanities. The Saviour was humane. We are apt to say that He wrought His miracles of mercy in order to attest His Divine Commission, or in order to open men's hearts to His message. This, doubtless, was the specific design of some of them, and it was the eventual effect of all. But it is simpler and more accordant with facts to say that He did them because of the Divine delight He felt in doing good. He bound up the broken-hearted, and comforted the mourners, because the Spirit of the Lord who rested upon Him is a Spirit of beneficence and tenderness, and to scatter mercies along His path, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to cheer the sad, was to gratify the Godlike charity with which His bosom glowed. And so the intelligent and Christlike Christian will be humane. He will be tender-hearted, pitiful, and to do good and communicate he will not forget. With his eye fixed on men's spiritual elevation as his final object, he will not refuse the relief of their material wants and temporal necessities ; but partly as the pioneer of the Gospel, and partly as the prompting of a pure philanthropy, he will dispense these benefits which the most earthly can appreciate, and which, alas ! are most needed by those who are never to know aught of Heaven except what the disciple of Jesus imports to their dwelling. And in this way the Christian visitor is the true sanitary and social reformer, the true sister of mercy, the real successor of Dorcas and Phebe.

And this brings us to the last of the Christian's friendly functions in this ill-conditioned world. The Church is, or ought to be, the nursing-mother of all the world's children, the teacher and trainer of all the rising youth, so far as the opportunity is given. Of course, we refer to religious teaching and moral training, and we say that so far as the world is willing to intrust its children to the Church, in its Day-schools and Sabbath-schools, the Church is bound to convey to them those lessons which may render them wise unto everlasting life. The Church may be ill able to educate the rising race, or worldly parents may refuse to intrust their children to the Church; but so far as the Church possesses the resources within herself, and the confidence of the community, God is saying of the youthful population now scattered over the earth,—Take these children, and rear them for me. And what is true of the Church is true of the Christian, and if as a parent, a teacher, a tutor, a Sabbath-school conductor, God has given you peculiar access to the mind of a child, and a greater influence over it than any other Christian man possesses, you are the person at whose hand the soul of that child is required; and in order to get quit of responsibility, never rest till you can rejoice in its salvation.

I have now indicated two ways in which the Christian and the Church, the believer in his individual and associated capacity, acts as the salt of society. He acts as the world's conscience, a witness for God; and he acts as the world's benefactor, a worker for God. And the two best contributions you can make to the world's welfare are,

first, to add something to its conscience; and secondly, to add something temporally and spiritually to its comfort.

This you will do if you fill your mind with vivid realizations of what God has spoken. The sayings of God are not to be dealt with as dogmas of Divinity. They are Yea and Amen. They represent realities. There is a Heaven before us, and there is a Hell. There is such a thing as sin, a bitter God-hating virus in man's apostate nature; and there is such a thing as regeneration,—the removal of that virus, the renewal of that nature. It was blood Divine which flowed on Calvary long ago, and that blood still cleanseth from all sin. These are facts, verities, faithful sayings: let us realize them. And then again there are works of the flesh, sins constitutional to man now fallen, which are abhorrent to the Most High,—"lasciviousness, idolatry, strife, seditions, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like,"—works of the devil for the destruction of which the Son of God was manifest. Imbibing the mind and continuing the mission of the Saviour, let us also labour to destroy them. And there are fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,"—fruits of the Spirit which God desires should yet develop all over the earth, and for the formation, the forcing of which there is need of salt in the earth,—need of that congenial conscience which is full of goodness, and which, in the progress of virtue, shares the joy of the Holy One.

Still further, you will be the salt of society, if, filled with gracious principle, you are also careful to spread it. What the Saviour meant by salt seems plain from

the context. He had just enumerated the beatific attributes of Christian character—humility, meekness, mercifulness, heart-purity, and then He adds, "Ye disciples are the salt of the world." Concentrate in your own dispositions this humility, this meekness, this mercifulness, this purity, and so become the salt of society. Concentrate in yourselves these graces, and so diffuse them. You perceive how essential the combination is,—there must not only be the grace in possession, but there must be the diffusive propensity. That is, the salt must be soluble. Sometimes you find a Christian who is correct and exemplary, but not communicative, genuine but granular, salt, but a crystal, anhydrous and not easily soluble. This grace must also be sought,—the grace of graciousness, the grace which diffuses grace: that fearless as that friendly mood which presses cordially on their minds the momentous truths with which your own are filled, that affectionate desirousness which is willing to impart not the Gospel only but also its own soul, and which in imparting the one imparts the other—that frankness which feels the kindness of its own embassy, and which, even when the most rudely repulsed, has the comfort of knowing that at least one person has been the better for this effort.

Have salt in yourselves, have grace in the heart; in other words, take in the happiness which God in the Gospel offers you, and take hold of that help which at a throne of grace may be obtained by every one who asks for it, and your bright trustful spirit will make you a continual benefaction.

"The brooks that brim with showers,
And sparkle on their way,
Will freshen and will feed the flowers,
Thus working while they play.

Nor will our hearts do less,
If happily we live;
For cheerfulness is usefulness,
The life we have we give.

If freely we receive,
We freely will bestow;
And tokens of our passage leave
Where'er we shine and flow."

The sprightly teacher, the cheerful hopeful nurse in the sick-room, the fellow-pilgrim who beguiles the road with profitable converse or songs of rejoicing, is each doing Christ's work, and so far contributing to redeem from the curse a sinful and sorrow-stricken world.

Have salt in yourselves. Christianity is the great antiseptic. With the tendencies to further decomposition and destruction in our fallen and depraved humanity, the great preservative, nay, the great restorative, is Christian principle.

SERMON XVI.

THIRSTING FOR GOD.

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"—PSALM XLII. 2.

THERE are persons to whom, as it were, God does not live. He is no essential element in their existence. They think of Him seldom, and when they do think of Him it is reluctantly, vaguely, with no comfort or complacency. God is not in all their thoughts, or if He does come into their thoughts, it is to be dishonoured by carnal or impious conceptions. On the other hand, there are happy persons to whom the living God is the chiefest joy. They have got that assuring or attractive view of Him which has changed dread and dislike into love and adoration; and they have got that influence from above which has bent their nature Godward, and brought them in some measure to a conformity with the Divine nature. It is not the god of the classic pagan—a deity altogether like the sinner himself; it is not the god of the philosopher—an abstraction ethereal and negative; it is not the god of the poet—a creator of the creature's own creating: but He is the Living God, the God revealed in the Bible, the God who made the heavens and the earth, the God

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord God merciful and gracious, righteous and true, of whom the believer has said, "O Lord, thou art my portion in the land of the living."

The man to whom the ever-blessed Jehovah thus lives —to whom the living God is such an object of reverential worship, and such a source of holy satisfaction—is one of those whom the Bible calls the godly, the people of God, the children of God, the royal priesthood, the saints of the Most High. And that instinct Godward which he possesses is what we so often read and speak of as a *spiritual mind.* In the Psalm before us we have the experience and actings of such a mind; and the words of our text are its cardiphonia; the bitter cry of a burning heart which knew what would cool its fever, but which was for the time debarred the fountain of its joy. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." My soul is parched, and the only thing that can slake its thirst and drench it in delight, is that River of Pleasures which the eternal and all-sufficient Jehovah is.

There are two ways in which the great God may prove the joy of the regenerate soul. One way is when that soul gets such a view of God's perfections as awakens bright and blessed thoughts within it. Another is when, by His Spirit direct, God enters that soul, and inundates it with a holy peace and celestial purity, making it for the time a partaker of the Divine nature. The one eye of the Fountain is Immanuel, the other is the Holy Spirit. The pitcher at the one Fountain is the Word; at the other it is Prayer. In the one case the spiritual

refreshment is GOD MANIFESTED; in the other case it is GOD COMMUNICATED. And yet let us not be too careful to distinguish; for it is the grace of God imparted which makes the glory of God attractive. It is the angel from heaven who reveals to our thirsting Hagars the Well of Heaven; and then with eyes brightened by the timely draught, Hagar sees the friendly angel still better. It is through Immanuel that the Comforter comes, and it is the Comforter's work to reveal the Saviour; and it is only through the Spirit of God communicated that the glory of God to any given soul becomes really manifest.

Assuming then that the great source of soul-satisfaction is God, I shall endeavour to indicate

I. Some of the ways in which we may obtain communion with Him; and II. Some of the effects of that communion.

I. 1. A renewed soul may commune with God in His works. "O Lord my God, thou art very great. With light as with a garment thou clothest thyself, and as a curtain festoonest the cloudy sky. With beams of water hast thou built thy palace, and in thy chariot of cloud thou walkest on the wings of the wind, making the hurricane thy messenger, and the flaming fire thy minister. O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. The glory of Jehovah shall endure for ever: Jehovah shall rejoice in his works." If the soul be really sanctified, it is hardly possible but that now and then Jehovah's power or wisdom in His handiwork should come over it in a gush of wonder and quicken the pulse of praise. And

whether it be the kindness which has thought of the conies and cares for the sparrows, or the contrivance which from the briny ocean brings sweet showers to the sultry hills; whether it be the grandeur of mountain ranges or the gracefulness of their flowering garlands, or the starry brightness of their buried gems; whether it be the sunny flow of zephyrs over rose-beds in June, or the crisp airs from autumn's rustling fields,—tides of pious thought and resistless thankfulness do sometimes revel through the soul; and, no longer tinkling cymbals or tuneful lullabies, Psalms like the 8th, and 65th, and 104th, acquire the significance of spiritual songs, and flow forth joyfully as heartfelt anthems. The soul has drunk from the river of the Creator's power, and skill, and kindness, and wonder awakens praise.

2. A renewed soul will commune with God in His Word. A person may put his mind into a letter or a book, and it may very sincerely be his mind at the moment; but as new circumstances evolve, as new events occur around him, or as changes pass over his tastes and feelings, that early writing ceases to represent his real views, and if he were writing again it would be very different. But when the pen is in the hand of Infinite Wisdom, no subsequent change in the universe can alter His mind, and no new element can enter which He did not foresee. And here is our blessedness in possessing a Bible. Though it lets forth the mind of Jehovah in successive instalments, even as the world was able to bear it, all that it lets forth is real, unchanging, eternally true. Like the express image of His person—like Im-

manuel—the great I AM is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and His mind this morning is the very same as when ages ago He spoke to our world first by the prophets, and then by His Son from heaven. But when we take up the Bible we commune with One that was, and is, and is to come; with One whose mind never varies, and whose words never pass away. If as the sinner's Surety He loved His Son long ago, we know that He loves Him still. If He then bestowed eternal life on the believing sinner, we know that He bestows it now. If He was holy then, He is holy still. If when the Bible page was newly written, to pray was to have power with God, prayer will be power till time shall be no more. And if during the apostolic "yesterday," praise and free-will offerings, and philanthropic services were to God a pleasing sacrifice, they are pleasing "to-day," and will be pleasing for ever. So that the devout Bible-student has this amazing advantage. He needs no voice from Heaven. He needs no whisper through the sky, no sound seraphic in his ear. When he wants to know the very mind of his Father in Heaven, the very thing which this instant the High and Holy One in the habitation of eternity is purposing or loving or desiring *him* to do,—he has only to open the volume of the Book, and though in tattered binding, and on a sullied page, he has to spell out the obsolete orthography, to his spiritual perceptions it is all bright and holy as if an immortal pen had inscribed it on a leaf of the Tree of Life, and to himself direct had handed it perfumed with Paradise. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith

the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee. Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have calledthee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

3. But more expressly still, the believer communes with God in the contemplation of Jesus. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him;" and both for the precision and the plenitude of the information, by far the most satisfactory knowledge of God we can get, is that which we get by knowing Jesus. This is the great superiority of a New Testament saint. Believers, like David, had the same thirst which believers have now, but to slake that thirst they had not so full a fountain. They had a true longing after God. Their souls panted after Him, and, thankful for the glimpses of His power and glory which they had seen in the Sanctuary, they craved something clearer and more contenting still. For some vision of His face, for some forthshining of His countenance, for some manifestation of His glory, which they could scarcely define, they often felt as if their hearts were breaking. It was an epiphany—an embodiment of

the unseen Jehovah—a specimen of His perfections on which they might gaze at leisure and without being consumed. It was an INCARNATION for which, hardly confessing it to themselves, patriarchs and prophets yearned, when Moses prayed, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory;" and David, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and glory; my soul followeth hard after thee." And the wish which they would have felt presumptuous to express in words, which as a dim desire their regenerate instincts felt, and which was the meaning of many a distressful troubled cry; that wish in the fulness of time God gratified, and what many prophets and righteous men desired to see, and were not permitted, evangelists and apostles saw, for in the person of their Master they gazed on God manifest. "The Word was made flesh." The holiness of God was made the sinlessness of Jesus. The condescension of God was made the considerateness and gentleness of Christ. The mind of God in regard to man's conduct was made the pure truth-telling, soul-kindling ethics of the Saviour. And the love of God was made the sympathy and affectionateness of the Son of Mary. "The Word was made flesh." The Invisible Supreme became palpable to mortal eyes, and the incomprehensible Jehovah became articulate to the heart of humanity; and there could now be no mistaking, for whatever Jesus was, *that* Jehovah *is*. "The Word was made flesh," and that not for a moment. The manifestation was not like the passage of a meteor, or like the *Jubilate* of the Heavenly host who pioneered and proclaimed it,—"a dream and a forgetting,"—a flash of

noontide and then a reign of drearier midnight—an ecstasy and an evanishing; but it was deliberate, protracted, satisfying: "The Word *dwelt* amongst us, full of grace and truth, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,"—beheld it, and had leisure to behold. Hence, knowing how the Incarnate Mystery was that morning of joy for which the old-world believers had all been waiting, a view of God vivid yet benign, true yet attempered to the weakness of fleshly eyes,—knowing that this was the great desideratum with spirits quickened from on high, to perpetuate that manifestation is the main business of New Testament Scripture. And it is beautiful to notice how the Apostle who had drunk the deepest at this river of Revelation, and as if the cry of Moses and David and Habakkuk, and all the old yearning saints who panted for a sight of God, were ringing in his ears, as if in the straining eyes and wistful faces of every believer he read the same behest, and could hear from the bosom of the Church universal a murmur asking for God manifest,—it is beautiful to observe how John the Divine, in the beginning of his Gospel, his Apocalypse, and his general Epistle comes bursting out with the wondrous tidings, and tells that the want is at last supplied, that the manifestation is vouchsafed for which the weary Church had so long been waiting. "That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have *handled*, of the Word of life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the

Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." You thirst for God? Then Jesus is the sinner's friend. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega. The Saviour is God manifest; the root and offspring of David is the "Living God" for whom you thirst. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

And this suggests the only other thought needful on the present part of our subject. In order to satisfy this thirst for God, it is needful not only that you should know what God is, but should know that this God is willing to be your own God. And so He is. It is in order to convey His fulness into the soul that God has revealed His glory. It is to communicate forgiveness, pardon, trust, sanctity, and full assurance that God has in Christ manifested His real character. And the two things are in practice inseparable. Whoever is so strengthened by the Holy Spirit as to know the love of Christ, is filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. iii. 19). Whoever gets that view of God's gracious disposition towards guilty man which it is the great design of the Gospel revelation to give, cannot fail to experience tender and thankful emotions towards the Lord God merciful and gracious; and that very emotion is a sign that God's Spirit is already working on his mind, and making him a partaker of the Divine nature. And just in proportion as

he perceives God's real character, and receives the things which of God are freely given to him, he will be full of peace, he will be full of goodness, he will be full of God.

II. Some of the effects of communion with God. What happens when under the teaching of the Holy Spirit a soul perceives the holiness, wisdom, and goodness of God, and is enabled to rejoice in this holy, wise, and good God as his own God—his Father and his Friend.

1. To be filled with God is to be filled with goodness. It is in the following words that the most genial of the Germans describes his first Communion:—"I left the altar with the purity and the infinity of Heaven in my heart; but this Heaven manifested itself in me through an unlimited gentle love which I felt for every human being. To this hour I preserve fresh in my memory the happy affection with which I looked on all the church-goers, and took them into my heart. Through the entire day the earth remained a boundless festival of love, and the whole web of life moved before me like a gentle wind-harp, through which the breath of love was softly breathing."[1] And though there proved to be more of feeling than of faith in the poet's experience, yet his words describe very well the benevolence of that bosom which the peace of God is keeping. That peace smoothes the furrows from the miser's anxious brow, and the frown from the misanthrope's contorted countenance; that peace puts music into the harsh voice of the railer, and brings mirth into the home of the disconsolate mourner; that

[1] Richter's Autobiography.

peace unfolds the griping fist of the parsimonious professor, and elicits friendly words from the accuser of his brethren; and just as the touch of immortality transforms into a vast importance the obscurest outcast, so the love of God entrances into a sacred endearment the vilest objects it looks upon. And even as the sun can never see darkness, for the moment the orb of day looks at it darkness is light, so love can never see loathsomeness, for its own emanations change what it does not chase away.

And hence, my dear friends, one mode to ascertain whether we ourselves have in any degree been filled from the fulness of God—whether we have imbibed into our souls those influences which renew men after God's own image in righteousness and true holiness. Divine communications produce a Divine conformity. The grace of God makes the receiver gracious, the peace of God makes him pacific; forgiveness enjoyed makes him forgiving; assurance of God's love makes him to all around loving and assuring—a lesser comforter in the world, like that greater and Heavenly Comforter who dwells in his own soul. But if a professing Christian is savage and sullen, proud and revengeful, rapacious and self-indulgent, coarse-minded and carnal, it is plain that he has drunk not from the river of God's pleasures, but from one of those theological Marahs which embitter men's spirits and make them murmurers, or one of those maddening streams which, whilst they do not destroy men's sins, only inflame their pride and increase their presumption.

2. To be filled with God is to be made independent (for the time at least) of earthly joys and earthly sorrows.

At a season of affliction, meditating on the words, "It is well," Samuel Pearce tells us, "I felt that were the universe destroyed, and I the only being in it besides God, He is fully adequate to my complete happiness; and had I been in an African wood, surrounded by devouring beasts and savage men, in such a place I should be the subject of perfect peace and exalted joy." And what he then experienced was just what the Hebrew prophet had expressed long before. The Chaldees had invaded the country, and famine followed in the wake of war. The country was desolate; his friends had gone into captivity; the invader had swept off the plenishing from the prophet's farm, and the stock from his stables, and, whilst the corn-crop had been cleared from the furrows, the fruit-crop had failed in the orchards and vineyards. But looking out on this silent and blasted scene, on the hushed farm-yard and the harried harvest-fields, from amidst the desolation the tones of a harp were heard, pensive at first, but swelling proudly: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; although the labour of the olive fail, and the fields yield no meat; although the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and like the rock-goat raising me on high, He will make me walk on my high places." And so with every soul whose portion is in God; it does not know how rich it is till all things else are gone; it does not think how social and how blessed that universe would be where God is all in all. And like the ibex

which has been tempted down from its mountain fastness by the fair pastures of the plains, it feels almost thankful for the opportune alarm, the seasonable disturbance which sent it back to safety and its mountain-pinnacles. "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and will cause me to walk on my high places." From these high places, in proportion as the Infinite and the Eternal draw near, so the temporal and the trivial dwindle and retire; and just as disappointments and discomforts assume their real magnitude, so the prizes of ambition and the pomps of mortality shrink into their native insignificance.

> "Had I a glimpse of Thee, my God,
> Kingdoms and men would vanish soon,—
> Vanish as though I saw them not,
> As a dim candle dies at noon."

3. Finally, to be filled with God is to be made fit for Heaven. Into this corrupt nature it is needful that a Divine communication should take place in order to supplant the earthly elements and infuse such as are celestial. It needs a visitation from God's Spirit to make minds like ours congenial with the mind of God. But when that visitation has occurred, and that congeniality has been created, it becomes to that new nature and to a faithful God a necessity that the new nature and Himself should be eternally together. "We shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make us drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light."

From these hints it may be gathered that there is such a thing as spiritual-mindedness, and that instead of a vague and fantastic mood, it is a very definite and a very desirable state of feeling. It is delight in God. It is that state of the desires and dispositions to which God's will is the overruling consideration, and God's favour the supreme felicity. It is the soul readjusted and set right, restored to its proper centre, seeking its happiness in God, and, in a life of dependence and devout acknowledgment, hanging on the sovereignty and faithfulness of God.

And we have seen some manifestations of this spiritual mind. We have dwelt on its thirsting after God. We have specified the joy which a sanctified taste can find in the works of God; that more various and more sacred joy it finds in His Word; and above all, we have seen how, to the soul thirsting after God, the river of plenteous revelation, the rock that ever follows and never ebbs in its forth-pouring of the Divine perfections, is CHRIST.

What a pity to feel such a subject dull! How sad not to have that propensity which points to heaven as its essential home! How mournful to be thus dead in trespasses and sins!—never thirsting! never realizing man's chief end—the exaltation and enjoyment of God!

And you who are so happy as to feel this thirst, be thankful for the many fountains which God has opened in this Baca of your pilgrimage. There are certain small islands of which I have read, where there are neither wells nor rivers, and the few animals found in them are only able to preserve their lives by drinking dew. And there was once a scanty revelation in the world—such

traditions as Noah handed down to Shem, and Shem to Abraham; but even then, when the doctrine distilled as the dew, there was faith in the earth; there were spiritual minds, and souls thirsting after God contrived to sustain the life Divine. But just as sometimes happens in a dry and thirsty land, the sky above is brass, and the clods beneath are iron; but deep underground, unknown and unsuspected, flows a lake or river, and when the appointed moment comes, the man of skill drills his auger down into these depths, and up through the dust and drought gushes the glorious crystal, effusing and effervescing, enough to slake the thirst of thousands and cover a barren land with beauty. So nothing could look drearier and more adust than the human race when the Redeemer came. Humanity was a dry and thirsty land, wherein no water was. But the fulness of time was come, and through this very humanity it was the purpose of God to let forth on the universe living water, a manifestation of God's manifold wisdom. In the house of David a Fountain opened. The Rock was smitten. Not *from* Humanity, but *through* Humanity, the fulness of Godhead poured out on our faint and fevered world, and whilst countless individuals have at that flowing Fountain quenched the thirst of sin and drawn immortal life into their dying souls, the dome which its jetting fulness makes is lighted by the rainbow of Heaven's covenant, and wide as the Spirit's gales have sprinkled its celestial comfort, so wide has the desert changed to verdure, so wide has the dusty wilderness bloomed and blossomed into the Church of Christ. Near that Fountain pitch your tent, and whilst you adore the

Incarnate Mystery, lead the life of daily communion with a living Redeemer. With joy draw water from His well of salvation, and through a thirsty world distribute the cups of cold water, the flasks and flagons, the tracts, the books, the Bibles, the invitation and the specimen which may induce him that is athirst to visit the Fountain opened.

The Gospel is each Divine perfection in solution. "The water of salvation be pure, clear as crystal. This be intended to show the Word of God, or the truth of God, in which there be no mixture of error. Just think how clear and *nothing-like!* and yet it be something. The pure waters gurgle up in your spring-house, so that you can see the bottom of the spring just as easy as if nothing were there. And yet, when the day is hot, and you be dry, how you love to take the gourd that hangs up there, and lift to your lip that pure substance, which, when you have drunk, you feel strong again and good all over. Now, brethren, it be so with the truth of God to that weeping, penitent, despairing sinner. When he drink of these pure waters, clear as crystal, they make both soul and body happy. O sinner! come to this flowing river! Its waters murmur at your feet; its billows kneel beseechingly to you, crying, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without price.'"[1]

[1] Watson's *Tales and Takings.*

SERMON XVII.[1]

SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—HEBREWS VII. 25.

JEHOVAH is the Lord of the universe, and no responsible creature can feel itself in its right place except in cheerful loyalty to its Creator. And Jehovah is the Joy of the Universe, and no intelligent being but must feel a great void in its affections, till once it love the Lord its God with all its strength and mind. But it is the misery of our human family that it has got away from God. There is none that understandeth and seeketh after God. There is none so wise as to begin with God. There is no man who spontaneously seeks in his Maker the Sovereign of his soul and the satisfaction of his spirit. There is none who of his own accord seeks in the perfections of God the repose of his affections, and in the will of God the conclusive rule of his conduct. There is none, till taught it from above, none who says habitually, "I must do this, because my Heavenly Father enjoins it: I must forbear this, because the good God forbids it." There is none who is not born anew, none who in sorrow says, "My wealth is gone, but God is the treasure of my soul; my health is

gone, and I shall no more gird myself and walk out and in amongst men: but I shall have the fuller leisure for a walk with God. My friend is dead, but God lives, and blessed be my Rock."

Leaving out the people of God, could we analyse these two things—the world's mirth and the world's morality, we should make an ominous discovery. Amidst all the abounding laughter and hilarity we should find no happiness truly divine. We should find no gladness which the thought of God had kindled; we should find very little but what the thought of God would quench and extinguish it. And amidst all the decorum and good conduct prevailing in many places, we should find no morality truly devout. We should find virtuous conduct prompted by the love of kindred, the love of reputation, the love of a quiet conscience, but very little prompted by the love of God. We should find the happiness all hollow and the goodness all counterfeit. Assuming godliness as the standard of genuineness, we should find the morality was not gold, but gilding, and that the mirth was not the wine of paradise, but earth's cold water coloured purple.

But when by any means a soul is startled into truth, when it discovers that he alone has well-being who has his being in God, and that he alone is on the road to blessedness whose life is a walk with God, a complacency in God's character and a coincidence with God's righteous pleasure, a new difficulty arises:—"How shall I come to God? How shall I get over the past? How shall I get away from myself? How shall a mass of pollution like me establish a claim on the mercy of God? How

shall a congeries of sins and infirmities render himself important or profitable to the Most High and Most Holy?"

And it is at this juncture that *mediation* comes in so opportune and so gracious. To the soul who would fain get into God's friendship Immanuel is the entrance door. To the soul who would fain make up for the past, and set out on a footing of forgiveness and amity with his Maker, Christ's work is the propitiating, the peace-procuring merit. The Son of God became the Son of Man. Jesus is the relative of our race,—the kinsman of our guilty family. In His own body on the tree He bare His people's sins, and more than repaired the damage we had sustained in the defection of our first progenitor. The barrier which guilt had erected between the sinner and a holy God, the Surety neither evaded nor rudely broke through: but in the way of a satisfying atonement He righteously removed it. And the passport into the presence of a pure and sin-hating God, which we lost when we lost our innocence, the Saviour has abundantly replaced: for He neither bids us manufacture a new merit for ourselves, nor has He pieced together the torn and sullied fragments of our own, but He provides us with a better. He gives us *His*. All that original endearment which He had with the Father as His beloved and co-equal Son, and all that subsequent merit which He achieved as the sinner's substitute, He puts at the disposal of every child of Adam, and makes us welcome to use it as ours. "Do you desire to come to God? Then come in My name. The Father has received me, and for

my sake He will receive and welcome you. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. I am able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through me. Through me come you to God and be saved. I ever live. I ever reign at the Father's right hand. As long as there is a sinner on earth there will be a Divine Intercessor in heaven. In that intercession the sweet savour of my one offering perpetuates itself. Bring joy to God, oh rebel, by coming unto Him. Bring joy to the Saviour, oh lost one, by coming through me."

Without expounding the rich and consolatory context in which it lies imbedded, we shall confine our morning meditation to the one idea,—Salvation to the uttermost—*εἰς τὸ παντελὲς*—a phrase, like the salvation itself, including everything—the fulness of its provisions and the extent of its range including every provision for all sorts of persons. And may the contemplation be so guided by God the Spirit as to put our mind into a frame congenial with the day and its sacred services.

1. Christ Jesus is able to save to the uttermost; for there is no degree of guilt from which He cannot save. It would be a hard question to decide which is the worst form of human guilt. Murder, you say:—the crime which is more or less the crime of Cain, and makes a brother's blood cry to Heaven for vengeance. But fearful as that intercessor is,—fearful as it is to have a fellow-creature's blood interceding against the man-slayer, and praying that God would not hear his prayers, yet even here the atonement has interposed, and the merciful

intercession of Jesus has snatched the murderer from the hell to which the vengeful cry of blood was entreating God to send him. The worst murder ever perpetrated was the slaying of the Lord of glory; but less than two months after it was done, an inspired Apostle said to the men who did it, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And many of them gladly received the Word, and were added to the Church: so that the prayer of the dying Saviour was literally fulfilled, and for the Son's sake the Father "forgave" the men who slew the Son. It is hard to say which is of sins most heinous. Blasphemy, perhaps: that Deicidal crime which, just as murder strikes at the life of a fellow-mortal, so would it aim its frantic blows at the existence or the blessedness of the great I AM,—that God-insulting enmity which shoots against the heavens arrows that return on its own head,—that impious hostility which, with viper venom but worm-like weakness, dashes and destroys itself on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler. And as if to make his condemnation sure, the Jewish Nero added blasphemy to bloodshed, making at once heaven and the human race his rightful foes. But God's mercy is above the heavens, and in a flood of forgiveness He drowned Manasseh's guilt; and the monster once red with slaughter, and black with impiety, sought the Lord and was accepted, and is now a saint in Heaven. And there was another who counted his own case worse than Manasseh's yet:—one whose case seemed very hopeless, for his quarrel was with the great

Salvation, and the object of his rabid enmity was the Saviour Himself. And not content with the execrations which he poured on the name of Jesus, and the defiance he dealt to the Holy Spirit in his resisting of all conviction, when he got a disciple of Jesus in his power he compelled him to blaspheme the blessed name in which he trusted. But instead of the thunderbolts of vengeance scathing his defiant and audacious frame, the lightning-flash of mercy surprised and dissolved his soul. In Saul, the chief of sinners, Jesus "showed all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe;" and from the very chief of sinners the Lord selected the very chief of Apostles. And so through the whole series of human transgression, though human guilt is so varied, and though it be in seeking out many wicked inventions that human ingenuity is most displayed, we owe it to the power and grace of Immanuel to repeat that broader than human transgression is the Divine atonement: and though there were now to stand up in this place some paragon of peerless enormity, some unhappy desperado who could say that there was not a sin forbidden in the Decalogue but he had committed it—nay, that he believed there were sins which he had perpetrated, and which it had never entered into any heart to conceive—nay, that he feared that he had done sins which a devil could not do,—though we might shudder at the awful acknowledgment, and recoil from such an incarnation of wickedness, yet, if that miserable man were asking, "What must I do to be saved?" as Christ's ambassadors we should have no right to be silent. In duty to

our Master, and in justice to the Gospel, we should be obliged to reply: "If *any man* sin, we have an advocate with the Father, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." And instead of grudging that depravity so dreadful should escape a righteous perdition, we ought to rejoice that the sacrifice of Christ has results so splendid, and that even from brands already burning the transforming Spirit can create green trees—trees of righteousness.

2. But not only can Jesus save to the uttermost extent of depravity—He can save to the uttermost hour of existence. Both truths may be abused, and both will be abused, by the children of wrath, by those who because of abounding grace continue in sin. But still we must state them; and up to the last moment of life Jesus is able to save. Amongst my hearers there are old disciples. Perhaps there is also an old transgressor; perhaps there is one whose hairs have grown hoary in the midst of his trespasses; and now, though you sometimes feel a sort of dim desire for salvation, yet everything is so dull and listless with you, that you fear it will come to no bearing, no satisfactory result. Habits are so inveterate that you cannot hope to change them, and your feelings have grown so callous that you fear nothing can now effectually rouse you; besides, you cannot help fearing, that after resisting so many invitations and entreaties, the striving Spirit must long since have taken leave of you, and handed you over to a hard heart and an impenitent mind. But whatever you limit, do not limit the grace and power of Jesus Christ. We do not expect to see physical or intellectual miracles. We do not expect to see the white locks resume

the raven gloss of youthful freshness, nor do we expect fountains of poetry to open in minds whence emotion and fancy have long since evaporated. But there is a spiritual renovation which has often been exhibited, and which is better than any other renewal of one's youth—the little child a hundred years old—the patriarch new-born into the kingdom of God. Come to God through Jesus Christ, and experience this most blessed of all rejuvenescence. Open your ear to the sound of the Gospel, and your heart will soon open to its sweetness; and whilst angry with yourself for not giving to so dear a Master the dew of your youth, you will adore that grace which can save from the sins of a century, and bless with immortal youth the soul which had grown effete in the service of Satan.

3. Jesus saves to the uttermost, because He saves down to the lowest limit of intelligence.[1]

4. Jesus can save in the utmost pressure of temptation. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He saves to the uttermost, for He ever intercedes; and but for that intercession faith would often fail. There is a poor peasant girl before the tribunal of the Inquisition, and to the eye of sense all conspires one way. That scarlet cardinal, so awful to her childish imagination; those stern ruffians on every side; the thought what thick and hopeless walls intervene betwixt herself and the nearest sympathetic heart; the dark place dimly revealing its instruments of horrid cruelty; and then the killing thought, that in the outer and sun-

[1] This portion of the MS. has not been extended.

gladdened world two souls at least are suffering simultaneous martyrdom—her mother and her affianced lover; and then the simple extrication, "Kiss this crucifix—say Ave Maria. Bow thy stubborn knee,—or burn;"—at such a moment to forget one's father's house and rise above the fear of man, and welcome the chariot of fire,—weakness thus strengthened is a cheering token that still the Saviour intercedes. And there is a humble man, the servant of a purse-proud worldling, and he is told that a lie, or a broken Sabbath, or some dishonest deed, is the price of promotion or continued patronage. And it is not because he is alone in the world, for he has that bed-rid father or these helpless babes to provide for; and it is not because he has money in the bank, for all his efforts have barely sufficed to pay his way from week to week; and it is not because he has other employment in prospect, for places are scarce, and the labour market full; but it is because he remembers that he has a Master in Heaven, and that Master remembers that he has a weak servant on earth, that he says with a firm heart though a faltering voice, "God help me, but I cannot sin." And thus, brethren, whatever the temptation is, our safety is not in habits of virtue. It is not in sturdy resolution and strength of character. It is not even in the timely thought of sin's consequences,—the remorse and ignominy—yes, or perhaps the everlasting destruction which will follow; but our safety is in the Saviour. Christ ever lives and ever intercedes; and it is our strength, our triumph, to rush into His arms of omnipotent protection. Yes, and should Satan succeed,—should

he by some hellish stratagem cut off our access to the throne of grace; should he fill us with dislike to prayer, or distrust of its efficacy, "rejoice not over me, O mine enemy: thy triumphing, O wicked one, is short." No sheep can be snatched from the Bishop of souls, and interceding for that poor panic-stricken one who has ceased to pray for himself, the Saviour brings him back rejoicing—saved at the uttermost.

5. And Jesus saves to the uttermost because when human power can proceed no further, He completes the Salvation. It is nature's final hour. Obsolete from age or exhausted by disease, the body can do its work no longer; and though neighbours and sobbing kindred gather round the bed, withdrawn into the recesses of that dull and dying frame it seems as if the beloved object were already far away. And so he is. These whispers of tenderness, and even those stanzas of familiar hymns and verses of sweetest Scripture, the muffled ear refuses to take in; and the last ebbing emotions of the believer and the friend, the palsied tongue and the filmy eye refuse to carry out; and it is only the faint pressure of the clammy fingers which tells that love and life still linger. But whilst all communication is thus cut off, and whilst the assiduities of nursing kindness are exchanged for a silent and sorrowful spectatorship,—though the hour for the stated prescription is long since past, and the phial still stands on the table, but no one fills the measure or plies the cordial,—though the open shutters and the neglected fire all indicate that the work of human friendship is over, there is another Friend who is busy, and another

work which is going rapidly forward in that hushed and shadowy room. "Lord Jesus, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," had been the oft-repeated prayer of the dying Christian in clearer and more conscious hours. And "Father, I will that this one whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" had been the Mediator's prayer for him not only before he came to die, but before he was born. And now with busy but noiseless process the Comforter is giving the last finish to the sanctifying work, and making the heir of glory meet for home, till, at signal given, the portal opens, and even the numb body feels the burst of blessedness as the rigid features smile and say, "I see Jesus," then leave the vision pictured on the pale but placid brow.

Brethren, is not this the Saviour you need? one who can save you from the utmost depth of depravity, in the utmost corner of the earth, on the utmost inch of time? One who can save you amidst the utmost urgency of fierce temptations, and who in that uttermost extreme of exhausted nature, when heart and flesh do faint and fail, completes the work and seals the Salvation for evermore? Is not this the Saviour whom you need,—one who ever lives and ever intercedes,—not Mary, not Anna, not Joseph or Peter or Gabriel,—but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Son of Man,—the omnipresent witness of our wants, the tender reader of our inmost thoughts, the mighty Advocate of whom alone it is said, "Him the Father heareth always,"—whose intercession has all the force of a fiat, and whose treasury contains all the fulness of God.

If so, come to God through Him. Do you acquiesce in the truths of Revelation? Do you desire a God that is holy and just and true? Are you well pleased with the precepts of God's law,—so reasonable and pure and righteous? Are you content that God's law should be magnified, and God's holiness vindicated in the perdition of impenitent transgressors? Then come to God through Jesus Christ.

SERMON XVIII.[1]

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."—MATT. XXV. 46.

THE subject of this evening is so solemn and so painful that if it could be avoided, consistently with ministerial fidelity, I would not preach on it at all. But if a minister would say, "I am free from the blood of all men," he must also be able to say, "I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." I pray that I may be enabled to speak with such feelings as the subject requires; and I pray that the feeling awakened by its discussion may be neither resentment nor resistance, but a saving repentance, and a timely fleeing from the wrath to come.

On such a subject as the duration of future punishment we can appeal to Scripture alone: for it is from Scripture alone that we have any certain light on future existence at all. Annihilate the Bible, and the entire question of immortality will be exactly where Socrates and Cicero left it—a possibility, a likelihood, an interesting contingency, an important question which death

alone can answer. It is through the Gospel Revelation alone that immortality is brought to light; and the only book which sheds light on the future state of the righteous is the only book which can decide the future state of the wicked.

"Everlasting fire," Jude 7; "Eternal damnation," Mark iii. 29; "Everlasting burnings," Isa. xxxiii. 14; "Worm dieth not," Mark ix. 44; "Better not born," Matt. xxvi. 24. These sayings should be decisive. It would not be easy to imagine language more strong; and if anything could add to its strength, it would be to quote some of the evasions and glosses by which men have tried to explain it away. But there is one argument on which much stress is laid by many that we must shortly advert to it. It is an argument usually urged by the lawless and disobedient, who wish to indulge their own passions and sinful propensities, regardless of God's threatenings; but we doubt not that it has been also employed, and that the force of it has been powerfully felt, by many to whom God's glory was dear, and who would have trembled to loosen the motives to virtue,—I mean the Divine Benevolence. So good and merciful is God, they argue, that we cannot believe that He would bring creatures into existence in the long-run of whose history there would be more of pain than pleasure. God is Love, say some; and so inconsistent with His goodness is the everlasting punishment of temporary sins, that we are justified when we use some violence in explaining away the passages which seem to threaten it. God is good, say others; and so inconsistent with His goodness is the ever-

lasting punishment of temporary sins, that seeing the Bible threatens this, we reject the Bible altogether.

To the latter class it is enough to answer, "If you reject the Bible altogether, how will you prove that God is good?" But still, in common with both objectors, we joyfully concede the Divine Benevolence. We grant that God is good; that He is Love; that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; nay, that He is the Father of spirits, and that it is with regretful remonstrance that He sees any intelligent child of immortality rushing on its own destruction. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth."

But God is not only benevolent; He is righteous and holy and true, and if His truth and holiness require the everlasting punishment of sin, His benevolence will not prevent it.

It sometimes happens that a judge is a man of exquisite mildness and humanity, and the criminal on whom he is called to give sentence has powerful claims to his pity. Perhaps he has not often repeated the crime of which he is convicted. Perhaps he has showed some interesting traits of character, and very likely he has innocent and respectable relatives who are plunged by his conviction into the most poignant anguish. And if the judge allows himself to dwell on the full extent of the suffering to which his sentence will adjudge the delinquent, the prospect is very terrible. "Here is a poor fellow-creature to be transported beyond seas for all his natural life. What does that mean? Why, it means

that he must leave his native land, to which we are all more or less attached. It means that he shall from this moment forward never more be his own master again. It means that all his days he shall wear the felon's garb, and every morning wake up to find himself in a cell of ignominy, the companion of coarse-minded men, and the mere passive implement of other people's will. It means that he shall never again see his wife and family, and never more enjoy a holiday in the pleasant fields, and never more have the zest and animation of labouring for the good of those he loves; for a single act a branded malefactor, a hopeless drudge; for a deed which it did not take a moment to do, a life-long exile." Were a man who is mild and merciful dwelling on such details exclusively, he could not carry out his oath of office. He could not administer the laws; and for the luxury of a sentimental self-indulgence he would inflict that sore punishment on society which every judge inflicts who concedes the impunity of virtue to convicted villany. But, perhaps with his eyes wide open to these painful facts, this judge considers still further:—"Yes, but it was his part, not mine, to foresee all this. The law was plain, and its threatening explicit. He knew that he was committing a crime, and he knew the consequence; and now, if there be room for benevolence in the case at all, the question is, shall I show the mercy to the harmless community, or shall I show it to this detected miscreant?" Surely in the eyes of all impartial on-lookers this triumph of principle over natural tenderness would invest the character of the judge with an attribute of integrity and augustness far rarer and more

precious than the cheap applause procured by promiscuous and undiscerning acquittals. And if it were known that, before the sentence went forth, there had first to be subdued in his bosom all the softer impulses of the man and the philanthropist, this tribute to the majesty of law and to the welfare of society would do more for the repression of crime and for the reign of righteousness, than a national jail-delivery.

In the present case we must remember that our judgments are biassed by our own position. We are all in the same condemnation, and it is natural for us to lean to the lenient side, for that side is our own. But if by any effort, if by the interposition of the Spirit of God, we could be brought to the standing-point of an unfallen universe, our judgment would be greatly modified. We should then see that there is a majesty in retribution, and that there are retributions at which Benevolence itself may rejoice. For instance, in the Revelation we read of a community which is there called Babylon the Great. The members of that community were proud and oppressive. They were drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs. They were the originators of the worst "abominations of the earth." They were the blasphemers of God and the debauchers of the human race. But at last on this corrupt community the bolts of Heaven burst, and the vials of its vengeance rained devouring fire. Now, we know that there are no bitter passions in heaven. We know that there is no one there capable of deriving happiness from another's pain. We know that there is no feeling inconsistent with a true benevolence; and yet immedi-

ately after describing the smoke of her burning, and while still gazing on the smouldering ruins and listening to the dirge which ruined traders sang over the mounts of reeking masonry, the Apostle adds: "After these things I heard a voice of much people in heaven, saying, Hallelujah: salvation and glory and honour and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Halleluiah: and her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great;" showing us that if the penalty is not excessive, that if the crime which provoked it was sufficiently great, there is nothing in an awful infliction which revolts the purest Benevolence In other words, a pure Benevolence never exists, except where there also exists a pure Rectitude and a pure Holiness; and when guilt receives its condign punishment, Benevolence is silent, whilst Holiness approves and Rectitude rejoices.

If a Judge or Governor be noted for Benevolence, we may calculate on that Benevolence so far. We may calculate on the completest fulfilment of his promises. We may be sure that when the candidate makes out his claim to the proffered prize, it will be a peculiar satisfaction to place it in his hands. And we may calculate on his not overstraining evidence, or pressing too severely the letter of the law against the evil-doer. And we may calculate on it that, when other claims are satisfied, it will be his

joy to let out his inherent goodness, and diffuse the widest happiness. But there are some things on which we may not calculate. If we expect that Benevolence will let the guilty pass unpunished, we shall sadly miscalculate. If we hope that Benevolence will lead him to break his word, we shall find ourselves fearfully mistaken. Most likely these mistakes have been made each time that God has threatened a great calamity. Most likely they were made by the antediluvians; perhaps they were made in Sodom. Men knew that they were bad. They confessed that they were not what they should be. But to drown them all, or burn them all, they felt that they were not bad enough to merit such a fate, and they were sure that, whatever He might say, the Most High never intended to mete out to them so hard a measure. And it was not till the cold water clasped their shivering form, it was not till in burning blue the flashes of sulphur fell amidst the startled scoffers, that they realized God's truth, and in the sudden awakening of conscience they felt for the first time that they fully deserved it all.

In treating of this subject I have forborne to enter into any abstract discussions as to the intrinsic demerit of sin. I prefer resting in the clear and indisputable sayings of Scripture. There we are told that the wages of sin is death; that the soul which sinneth shall die. And there we find that from the moment a man becomes a transgressor he is under condemnation. He occupies a new relation towards God—a relation of ever-augmenting remoteness—a remoteness which has no tendency to lessen

itself, and which every new sin increases. In other words, Scripture to all intents teaches that sin is an infinite evil, meriting an infinite punishment, and that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come. But there is one circumstance which I must notice, because it is at once an awful abuse of the Divine benevolence, and on the part of many a fatal sin against their own soul. We read of lying refuges, and we are oft reminded of the deceitfulness of sin; and surely no refuge can be more lying, no sin more deceitful, than the one I am about to mention. It does so happen in the history of our own world, that one threatening of Jehovah is seemingly unfulfilled. To our first parents he threatened, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But after eating the forbidden fruit, Adam lived nine hundred years; for it turned out that between the crime and its penalty a Surety had interposed. And because God's mercy found out a righteous expedient for saving the sinner then:—because the sword of justice, which a universe could not break, was diverted by incarnate Deity—the sinner hardly ventures to say it, but he half hopes it in his heart, that at the last a similar interposition may be repeated. He half hopes that in that dread hour when sinners are calling to the rocks to fall on them, another Surety may be found—another Saviour may volunteer, and that in the rich resources of exhaustless mercy another expedient may be devised for saving the impenitent and transferring to glory the Christ-rejecting transgressor.

If not the depth of depravity, surely this is sin's

desperate deceitfulness, thus to draw poison from the very well of salvation—thus from the balm of Gilead to confect a flattering unction, a killing opiate for your own soul. Far be it from a sinful worm to limit the loving-kindness of the Lord, or say to His mercy, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." But I fear, my friends, the limit is already fixed; this fantastic hope, I fear, is already doomed to disappointment. There is no other name given under heaven nor among men by which we can be saved, except Jesus Christ. Neither is there salvation in any other. And, pointing to this very fallacy, hear what the Holy Spirit saith:—"If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins (if, quite alive to the existence of the Gospel, and quite conceding its truth, we still go on to sin in the hope that we shall be saved by some new interposition of God, some *ex post facto* Gospel), there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." God's dispensation in that direction is finished. Beyond the cross of Christ, if we pass it by, "there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith *he* was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. It

is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." No, brethren, banish that delusion from your minds. There is not only an ample freeness and sufficiency in the Great Atonement, but it is equally marked by an absolute finality and a righteous exclusiveness. The incarnation and death of God's own Son may well suffice for a single world, and he who has not availed himself of that one great Sacrifice will find to his eternal sorrow that there remains no more sacrifice for sin; and will find it the infatuation of his guilt and the aggravation of his doom, that instead of availing himself of that one great Sacrifice betimes, he only made it a pretext for hoping that God, who spared not His own Son, would not only spare himself, but spare him though it should cost Immanuel another Gethsemane and a second Calvary.

For the further vindication of the Divine Benevolence and Justice in this matter, I would further add these three things:—

1. None shall go away into everlasting punishment who have not deserved it. In all hell there will not be found one innocent person; and should it happen that any one of its inmates were becoming innocent, he would not remain a moment longer there. And though I am quite aware that the perpetuity of future punishment is a doctrine from which many minds revolt, and in the righteousness of which it is not easy for an unbroken heart to acquiesce, yet there is a state of mind in which the doctrine not only seems reasonable, but nothing else possible. When God the Spirit convinces a man of sin, he feels himself so wicked, that God would only be just

and holy in banishing him from His presence. Nay, he feels that so long as he continues to exist with that evil heart of his, there is a necessary antipathy between it and Infinite Purity; and if continued sin is to be continued sorrow, he feels that the eternal existence of such depravity as his, must itself imply eternal punishment. In other words, he feels, that in the remotest epoch of eternity it will still read a true inscription "on the door of hell, 'Deserved,' as true as on the gate of Heaven, 'Free grace.'"[1]

2. In that unending sorrow none shall suffer more severely than his sins have merited. The servant who knew *not* his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with few stripes.[2]

3. None shall be there who might not have been elsewhere.

Some have argued that the pains of hell are not penal, but disciplinary,—reformatory,—and that they will end in the restoration and salvation of the sinner. Against this hypothesis nearly every text militates which treats of the subject at all; and to my own mind no texts more solemnly than those which speak of men to whom existence is no boon. Any man in the total of whose existence pain is overbalanced by pleasure, to him existence is on the whole a blessing. But the Saviour speaks of men to whom existence is not a blessing—sons of perdition, for whom it had been well if they never had been born, plainly intimating that in all the progress of

[1] Baxter.

[2] This section has not been extended by the Author.

their wretched immortality the scale will never turn, and the balance go over from agony to ecstasy. Ah no! my friends. The present is the state of discipline. This eventful outset of existence settles all. This is the period of probation; this is the only reformatory epoch; and as soon as it is ended, he that is filthy shall be filthy still, and he that is holy shall be holy for ever. You say that you find it hard to live a godly life now. You say that in this land of Sabbaths, and in these days of health, you cannot give up your sins, nor begin to live soberly and righteously. If that be true, oh think, my friend, the next world you inhabit will be far more difficult and disadvantageous. In the present life several things have had much influence on you, but you will find none of these things there. Here, there are chapters of the Bible which you have sometimes read with emotion: but you will find no Bible there. Here there are Sabbaths which bring a blessed leisure, and here you have heard sermons which solemnized you a good deal at the moment; but in that dark world there are no sermons preached, and lost souls keep no Sabbath. Here you had pious companions who would have helped you with their advice and their prayers; and here you had your closet or some calm retreat into which you could have retreated, and poured out your soul in prayer, and confessed your sins, and given yourself to God; but in hell there is no retirement, and in hell there is no sympathy, and no good counsellor. Here the cross of Christ is bright and conspicuous, and it is the world-wide life-long business of the Gospel ministry to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" but in the

outer darkness that cross is never seen, and though it might arrest the ceaseless wailings, and be re-echoed in incredulous halleluiahs through all the caverns of Despair, one Gospel text,—the joyful sound, never will be heard through all these doleful realms. And even now, with God's good Spirit striving with you, with all the moments of solemnity and tenderness and good resolution which you have experienced from time to time, even now you say that it is more than your volatile spirit, your wayward heart, can do to mind the one thing needful,—what will you do in a world where the Holy Spirit never strives, where every soul is fully left to its own depravity? and where there is no leisure for repentance if there were even the desire, but where there is too much present pain to admit repentance? where they gnaw their tongues with pain, and blaspheme the God of Heaven?

SERMON XIX.

PARABLES EXPANDED AND APPLIED: DIVES AND LAZARUS.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."—LUKE XVI. 19-31.

CHRIST was now addressing an audience such as may be found in the dead days of any orthodox community; and the persons whom He had immediately in view were men who by ritual punctiliousness tried to make up for the want of substantial morality,—men who, because they were so strict and staunch on a few traditional tenets,

fancied that they believed the whole Bible, and that they were the guardians of the ancient faith. For the most part they belonged to the respectable class of society, and by a fallacy not unusual they felt that there was something moral in their decency. Publicans and sinners were squalid and shabby-looking, and often lodged in filthy hovels, whereas they were always neatly if not sumptuously attired, and were very careful of outward appearances. And though it would be wrong to call them devout or godly, they were religious. They had not that full and hearty faith to which the entire Bible is true, and the whole will of God is welcome; but they had a large amount of superstitious misgiving. If they did not say their prayers properly they feared the day would not be lucky. If they had committed some crime which made their conscience uncomfortable, they fasted a little more strictly, or they enlarged the border of their garment, and added another text to the phylactery. If they fancied a neighbour's vineyard or a widow's house, they would not kill the owner, but they went legally to work. They lent the owner money, or they commenced an action of trespass, or by some vexatious and harassing procedure, they contrived at last to get possession. And if they wearied of a wife, instead of the striking and stabbing and other approved methods of English ruffianism, they commenced an ecclesiastical suit; they gave her a bill of divorcement and put her away.

The essence of Pharisaism was a *specious selfishness*. They were neither humane nor devout. Towards their fellow-creatures they were heartless or hard, heedless of

their sufferings, or even making a gain of their distresses. And towards God they were formal and untrue. They read the Scriptures, and yet they overlooked or ignored all the countless passages in which God is revealed as the rein-trying, heart-searching Jehovah, the God of truth, of benevolence, of holiness. Despite all his assurances to the contrary, they fancied that the Most High was so pleased with new moons and solemn feasts, with fat rams and rivers of oil, that if it was only followed by a costly sacrifice He would connive at any sin, and that for the sake of a long prayer He would forgive a great transgression. And their utter misconception of God's character destroyed their own. It made them hollow. It made them hypocrites. Fancying Him altogether such a one as themselves, as long as there were no marks of blood on their hands they did not mind what violence there was in their hearts; and so long as their dress was canonical, their devotions regular, their houses swept and garnished, they never minded though they themselves were only a whited sepulchre.

Christ had spoken a parable, the object of which was to inculcate fidelity to God and humanity towards our neighbours. He ended with the memorable adage, "No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." But the Pharisees ridiculed the idea. It was just what they did, and thought themselves so dexterous in doing. "The Pharisees, who were covetous, derided him." But Christ assured them that however plausibly, however feasibly in man's view, they might make the compromise, it would not stand God's scrutiny. Up to the

period of John's ministry the Law and the Prophets had existed and been seemingly received in Palestine; but so little hold had they taken of men's consciences, that it was not till alarmed by John's rousing ministry that these Prophets and that Law had been able to drive men into the kingdom of Heaven. And even now, to you Pharisees, the Law and the Prophets are a practical nonentity. In their collectiveness you stand up for them; in their actual details you evade them. And then He gave the case, most likely a hypothetical one, a parable which we have now read over.

Many have painted the rich man as remarkably wicked. Perhaps he was, but all that we can say of him is that he was selfish and inhumane, and had no practical belief in Moses and the Prophets. God had given him great wealth, but he spent it all on himself, and had no feeling as if he were God's steward. God gave him an object of beneficence, and sent Lazarus to his very door; but he did not seize the opportunity; he did not spare from his abundance to mitigate a fellow-creature's misery. God gave him Moses and the Prophets, but to him they were so much mere parchment, and for all that they said he neither drew out his soul to the hungry, nor gave up one selfish indulgence. God gave him life and leisure and the means of preparing for eternity; but he either fancied that there was no place of torment at all, or he somehow indolently hoped that God who had been so good to him in this life would be no worse to him in the next, and he took none of the means which God enjoined to make his salvation sure.

"There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." God gave this man great wealth, but instead of being content with such fare as health required, so as to afford the surplus for his needy neighbours, he lavished it all on feasts and finery. He dressed like a prince, and every day his table groaned with dainties, till at last his heart grew fat as grease, and in his forgetfulness of others and all-absorbing voluptuousness, he became in his own eyes a sort of demigod. Other men were common clay, but he was porcelain. Other men were worth nothing, but he was worth a million. Other men draggled through the mud, and toiled and sweated and wasted away in struggling for their daily bread; but in perfect preservation, without a speck on his turban or a rumple in his robe, he jaunted along in his golden car. No wonder that in proud appropriation he took all the good things of the universe home to himself. No wonder that when he saw a beautiful gem he instantly thought of his own decoration. No wonder that when he saw in the market rich fruits or rare dainties, he felt that they were created for him. No wonder if forgetful of their comfort and their highest interests, he felt as if his domestics were so many automatons to carry out his commands, and comply with his caprices. Their feelings, their family affection, their social enjoyment, their very consciences and immortal destinies must yield to the fiat of this purse-proud and self-idolizing autocrat.

The parable does not say so, but we can suppose it an afternoon when Dives came home from his airing. Out-

side his palace-gate there lay a beggar. In those days, before the Gospel had provided hospitals and public charities, it was usual for the sick poor to appeal for charity either in the crowded thoroughfares, or at rich men's doors, and Lazarus was laid at this great man's gate. Thin, haggard, and swathed up in rags, he was a painful spectacle, and yet he was a true child of Abraham. In all this piteous plight his faith did not falter, and such kindness had God shown to his soul, that in praise and thanksgiving he often forgot the distress of his body, and, amidst the dust, and the flies, and the dogs, I daresay he was oft repeating the words of the patriarch,—"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though disease has destroyed this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Lazarus was a saint, but he was a saint whose portion was all elsewhere. He had not a penny in this world, nor had he the power of earning one, and it was in the hope of a shekel or a loaf of bread that he had taken his station here. He had waited long. The sun was hot and the stones were hard, but what could he do? He must wait till the rich man came home. At last there was the jingle of horse-bells and the bicker of carriage-wheels, and the brass gates flew back to the full swing of either valve, and the suppliant dragged himself forward with an imploring movement; but though he held out a spectral hand, and his wistful gaze might have moved a heart of stone, Dives turned away disgusted, and, pointing to the beggar, flashed an angry look at the porter for permitting him to kennel there. The chariot swept in, and with a

clash the gates slammed-to, and sick and trembling the beggar sent back into his lair. Hoping against hope, he thought he would tarry, in case the rich man might relent and by and bye send him the crumbs from his table. And the rich man soon sat down. The board was in a blaze, and from golden flagons the red wine flowed into jewelled cups, and reeking viands mingled with rare essences whose magic filled the air; and as the host sank down into his silken couch, the band struck up, and Lazarus heard the music at the gate; and as the feast went on, and Dives asked a guest to try this flask from Lebanon, "What 's to be done, my Lord, to clear our streets of these unsightly objects? Just as I came in this evening, there was such a creature lying at my very door. I declare the horrid sight still haunts me." O Dives! if you do not like to see such wretches in the streets, build an hospital, and in the meanwhile send out some food and clothes to Lazarus. That ruby on your finger could provide a perfect Paradise for a hundred lazars; that costly dish just gone from your table would maintain a poor man for life. But no! selfishness, whilst it baulks its own enjoyment, destroys all compassion; whilst it sours upon his palate the sweetest morsel of the epicure, it also turns to gall the milk of human kindness; and the spectacle of this day has made Dives not pitiful, but cross and angry.

So Lazarus lies. As again and again a footfall is heard, he pricks up his ears, hoping that this may at last be a servant with crumbs from the table; but presently the music falls silent, the guests are gone, the gate is double-locked, and the stars are out. It is growing very cold,

and though a few hours ago, amongst the broiling stones, he felt parched and withered like a worm, Lazarus, as he coils up into a corner, shivers in the keen night-wind, and the beggar is growing very weak. He does not feel hungry now, but faint, and somewhat thirsty. It is growing very cold, and yet there is perspiration on his brow and a burning at his heart. "Ah yes! a cup of cold water—how delicious! thank you, dearest,"—for he thinks he is in his old home, as in his better days, and that his little daughter waits on him. He is not far wrong; it is his angel child. And who are all these in the bright robes with her? And what kind arms are those that clasp him? What is this melody, this light that breaks around him? Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom—Lazarus is in the presence of his God.

And Dives went to bed, but his sleep went from him. The couch was down, the hangings were Damascus silk, but from side to side the poor voluptuary turned and courted slumbers which would not come, and once or twice when he dozed a little, he started groaning beneath a nightmare. He fancied that he was lying in rags and sores at a rich man's gate, and that the rich man was hounding on the dogs to worry him; and as he woke, there was still before him that ghastly countenance and that imploring look, and he heard the cry of the famished man for the crumbs from his table. And amidst it all, there came a silence into the chamber, and it seemed as if a spectre stood beside the bed and gazed in between the curtains: and before the frightened victim could call for help—before he could offer the King of Terrors all

his fortune for a respite, his soul was scared out of its pampered tenement, and deep in the downy bed lay the rich man's corpse. And as guilt, "like burning lead," bore his spirit down to the gulf of sorrow, one of the first sights he saw was the land far off, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me," he cried, "and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Considering how haughty had been his commands, how sumptuous his requirements hitherto, there is exceeding pathos in a petition so modest, and in language so humble. He does not venture to ask Abraham himself to come; but—the crown of pride is fallen from his head—and he would be so grateful if the despised beggar would come; and he does not presume to say, "O that he would transport me to that cool river, or fetch me a cup of its crystal water!" but, "O that he would even dip the tip of his finger in it, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

This parable does not teach that it is a sin to be rich. Like health and mental power, wealth is the gift of God; and, like bodily vigour or intellectual energy, wealth may be made a great blessing. It may not only extend the sphere of the owner's enjoyment, but wisely administered it may vastly swell the sum of human happiness. One man of great substance may do more than a hundred others to encourage industry, to employ labour, to draw forth talent, to advance the arts, to alleviate misery, to extend the Gospel:—just as a man of great fortune, but great wickedness, may do more mischief than many bad

men of scanty means. Viewed in itself, and supposing it to be fairly come by, wealth is neither a virtue nor a vice; it is simply a talent, a power, a faculty,—like health and genius a good gift of God, but like health and genius capable of being so perverted as to prove its owner's curse.

Just so, there is no virtue in poverty. It is a dispensation of God's Providence; it is not a grace of God's Spirit. Viewed simply in itself it is neither moral nor immoral. Like pain, it is just an affliction, and, like other afflictions, it depends on the use that is made of it; it depends on the man's conduct under it whether it proves in the end a mere calamity or a blessing in disguise. And it is more than we dare hope that every beggar is a Lazarus; and it is a saddening thought how many have the rags and the wretchedness here without the prospect of a better part hereafter.

Whilst, therefore, we find nothing in the Bible like a denunciation of the rich as such, still less anything like the praise of pauperism—no praise of the voluntary poverty of the monk, but honourable mention of Abraham's independence, and Nehemiah's noble hospitalities, and Job's charities to the widow and the fatherless—what is the precise value or purpose of the present parable?

1. For one thing, it is an illustration of what Christ had hinted in the 15th verse. His hearers were apt to judge according to outward appearances. They called the proud happy, and were ready to confound suffering with sin. And so the Lord gives this example of one who was

highly esteemed among men, but who was worthless in God's sight. "The rich man died, and was buried." He was a man of good standing, and the whole district would turn out at his funeral. But though he did not die in debt, though there was no stigma on his memory, though a panegyric would be inscribed on his marble mausoleum, God "knew his heart," and could not countersign the eulogy. But whilst unwashed from its sins, the soul of Dives went down, whilst heavily loaded by its own inhumanity and ungodliness, the soul of the rich worldling was plunging away towards the abyss, the beggar had also died, but nothing is said of *his* burial. In the morning they would find outside the gate his lifeless remains, and they would get a shell and send them away to be consigned to the earth, amongst the other nameless poor, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. But besides the two bearers, and perchance some acquaintance as devout and as poor as Lazarus, there would be no procession at that funeral. And yet, highly esteemed as Dives was, and despised and down-trodden as was Lazarus, the Lord Jesus, in this passage, shows that the latter was the best and the noblest of the two. He shows that, however it might be with the Pharisees, though poor Lazarus might be no fit company for the gentry of Jerusalem, he was fit for Abraham's bosom; he was a companion fit for the angels, he was the associate whom Christ Himself had preferred.

And, brethren, if the grace of God has possession of your souls, you won't look so much to adventitious circumstances and outward appearances. The attractions which will draw your love or your admiration will not be

the purple robe and the fine linen, the sumptuous banquet and the splendid mansion, but where there is faith in God, where there is love to Christ, where there is solicitude for the Gospel's success, where there is a tender conscience and a fervent spirit, where there is the doing of the will of your Father in heaven, *there* will be your mother, your sister, and your brother. To godless wit you will prefer the cordial though unlettered forth-pourings which speak good of God's name, and though the "whited sepulchre" should glitter with gold and precious stones, and be enthroned in earth's highest places, and though the "living temple" should be all dilapidated and defaced, and little better than a ruin, as the home of praise and worship, as sure there to meet with truth and sincerity and sanctified emotion, your visits will in preference be paid at its shrine.

2. But a second lesson which the Saviour would teach is a lesson of humanity. Dives made a profession of religion; he called Abraham his father, and yet his heart was hard and unfeeling. He had not been in trouble, nor plagued like other men; but instead of making him grateful to God, and generous and bountiful, his good fortune made him only selfish and unsympathizing. So completely was he compassed about with pride, so strange to his own flesh had unsanctified prosperity made him, that he felt as if wretchedness had no right to come near him, and was almost angry that his eyes should be molested with the sight of misery. And I daresay he had such a feeling of his own importance, that there was not a good thing of this life which he did not appropriate, as if it were his

undoubted right, nor did he feel that there was any wrong in his engulfing all these good things, whilst many a Lazarus was receiving only evil things. He was such a selfist that he laid on the altar of one divinity, and that divinity himself, commodities and comforts, trinkets and jewels, rare dainties and fine clothes, which might have fed and clad and sheltered a multitude of his starving fellows.

The blessed God is the most benevolent because He is the best of beings; and this is one test of the reality of our religion: if it has made us new creatures, it has made us humane; if it has made us partakers of the Divine nature, it has made us kind and communicative; if it has made us Christ-like, it has made us like one who went about continually doing good. And for this softness of feeling, for this susceptibility to human suffering, I know not of any substitute, for I know nothing which will prove a man to be godly, if you can prove him still to be selfish.

But if humanity is a grace of God's Spirit, if in its truest, widest sense it is a Heaven-implanted principle, it none the less needs careful culture. Not only does it need to be wisely regulated, but more harm than good is done by its largesses, precipitate and promiscuous; but it needs to be constantly refreshed and fostered, lest it die away. Every beggar is not a Lazarus, and it is too likely that some on whom you spend time and pains and money will turn out hopelessly vicious and incurably depraved. Missions to the heathen do not succeed on the instant, and sometimes they yield no fruit for long and weary years. A district visitation has seldom converted the

entire field of its labour into a garden of God; nor do schools and asylums work like magic. No Ragged Refuge has reclaimed every one of its inmates, and no hospital has ever cured the whole of its patients. Yet who would be disheartened? If these movements of Christian humanity do not accomplish all that we desire, they accomplish all that God designs; they accomplish far more than the refractory materials and the feeble instruments would lead us to expect; they accomplish enough to show that God is with us, and that His Spirit works in every effort of sanctified philanthropy. Those hospitals restore to their kindred, and to the power of earning their daily bread, myriads every year; and these asylums wipe the tear from many an orphan's eye, and snatching them from the streets or from joyless dwellings, introduces the blind and dumb to intelligent existence and cheerful society. The Ragged School has clothed many a little ruffian, and seen him at last in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus; and from the Sabbath School have risen up a countless multitude, who are now the salt of society, the strength of the Church, the glory of Christ. Even Missions are successful. Missions have civilized the West India negroes. Missions have converted into abodes of peace and order and industry many of the savage South Sea Isles. Missions at this moment are stirring China. Long ago, a Mission converted Britain. And one way with another, the Gospel in the Christian,—the love of God in the hearts of His children,—Christian philanthropy is doing much to countervail the damage of the Fall, and destroy the works of the devil. And if there

be no region yet where it has created paradise, there is many a one which it has kept from becoming what otherwise it would have been—a pandemonium.

So, brethren, you who deprecate the doom of Dives, you who have somewhat tasted the blessing of benevolence, and who deprecate as a dire calamity the shutting up of your compassion, the freezing of your charity, think of these things. Think that no labour of Christian love is vain in the Lord. Think that in due season you will reap if you faint not; and think how freely you have yourself received; and thus thinking, you will take heed and beware of covetousness. You will devise liberal things, and by liberal things will you stand. You will give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, shall it be measured to you again.

SERMON XX.

LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO JESUS.

"And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." —MARK X. 13-16.

SURROUNDED by his family, old Jacob spent the evening of his days in the pleasant land of Goshen. The famine was forgotten, the flocks were thriving, and Jacob's sons were doing well. But he himself was growing very frail, and every one could see that the time was come that Israel must die. But one son was absent; he was a statesman, and lived in the capital. He was the prime minister of the country, and resided near the sovereign. So a messenger was despatched, and Joseph was told that his father was sick. He bade his own sons get ready, and he ordered his equipage, and at once took the road to Goshen. In the little hamlet it made some stir—the arrival of the Grand Vizier and his sons; but to Joseph it was a time of tenderness. Hastening to the chamber, *there* was propped up in bed the dear old man; his eyes dim and

bleared, his temples shrunk, his brow bent forward, and a snowy beard falling broad on his bosom. The arrival of Joseph touched the springs of memory, and sent the patriarch back to Canaan and Luz and Padan ; and he began to talk to Rachel's son about his much-loved mother and her grave on the road-side near Bethlehem. But just then he perceived two youths who stood behind. Slim, city-bred, and finely arrayed, they were not like their country cousins, the shepherd lads of Goshen, and Israel asked, "Who are these?" "These are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place," answered the governor of Egypt. It was the first time that Jacob had seen his grandsons, and as he embraced the boys, and kissed them, and beamed on them a smile of proud affection, he said to Joseph, "I never thought to see thy face, and God hath showed me also thy seed." And, placing a hand on the head of each, he said, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." And the prayer was heard. The Angel of the Covenant blessed the lads, and they grew into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

In that old Hebrew church great value was attached to the blessing of any eminently pious person, and parents were glad when a man of God pronounced or prayed a blessing on their offspring. At the place where Jesus now was, impressed with His sanctity, some parents brought their little children, in the hope, as Matthew expresses it, that He would "put his hands on them and pray."

But the disciples interfered. They did not enter into the feeling of the parents, and with the many urgencies which pressed on the Master, they grudged that He should be thus interrupted. But whatever might be the feeling of the disciples about "this parcel of children," they were neither contemptible nor unwelcome in the eye of their Lord. Hearing the disciples chiding their parents, Jesus was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." And taking them up in His arms, He put His hands on them, and blessed them. Yes, Jesus blessed them. In a sense more emphatic than the parents could anticipate, Jesus complied with their request. When Jacob "blessed" his sons and his grandsons, he could only beg with all his heart and soul that God would bless them. He had no authority to confer a blessing, but as a prince powerful with God he could urgently ask it. But Jesus conferred what He asked. His blessing was not only prayed for, but authoritatively pronounced. He said, "Father, I will;" and the benediction which He uttered over these babes, like the blessing which He shed over disciples when ascending into heaven, was one that would abide with them even to the end. Happy little ones whom the Son of God thus enclasped in His arms, and enfolded to His heart! Happy parents, who brought your offspring thus to Jesus! That was no bootless benison; that was a blessing sure to make rich. We doubt not that sooner or later theirs was the kingdom of God, and we do not wonder at the tradition which makes Ignatius the martyr one of them.

Looking at the incident, I think we may fairly draw from it the following inferences: —

1. That it is possible for a little child to be a *child of God.* The whole transaction implies this. And although we know that none are justified save those who are predestinated to eternal life, although we know that none of our fallen family are admitted to heaven except those who are washed in Christ's blood, although we know that none are God's children except those who are born of the Spirit, the case of Jeremiah and the Baptist and others may teach us that it is possible for a child to be sanctified from its infancy, and filled with the Holy Spirit, before spectators can detect the dawn of faith or even the dim commencements of reason. And when we advert to the function of the Son of God, the Second Adam, and, over against the first Adam's fatal sin set the Second Adam's redundant righteousness; when we think what multitudes of our species quit the world without ever sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet paying for that transgression the penalty of their early death, may we not hope that an equal number, "receiving abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by Jesus Christ," and eternally illustrate the merits of that second and better Covenant-Head? Is there not something in the Saviour's bearing towards those little ones which indicates a special interest in them, as if it was in them chiefly that He would see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; and in looking forward to a numerous seed, does not the transaction in question almost indicate that it would be literally of such as were known

on earth as "little children" that His kingdom shall be hereafter composed?

So that till once it can be positively shown that in "the election of grace" there is no room for all who die in infancy, with this incident before our eyes we shall claim for them a place in the heart of the Redeemer; not on the ground that they are innocent, but on the ground that the "one man, Christ Jesus," is righteous; not on the ground that the sin of the first Adam was not enough to ruin all his offspring, but on the ground that the obedience of the Second Adam is enough to save all who do not reject Him. We would, in this dispensation of grace abounding, hope the best for those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; and we feel as if this hope became a certainty when we hear Christ Himself saying, "Suffer them to come to me, for of such is the kingdom of God." We feel that it is not the sanctity of the Saviour, but the sullenness of man which would frown them away; and though a sly and lurking legality may hint that for babes and sucklings the heaven of saints and martyrs is too glorious, we are sure that Stephen will not repudiate as his companions in the kingdom of Jesus Christ the babes of Bethlehem; and we think that our Scottish worthy, Ralph Erskine, came nearer the spirit of the New Testament when he wrote it in his rhyme:—

> "In heav'nly choirs a question rose,
> That stirr'd up strife will never close:
> What rank of all the ransom'd race
> Owes highest praise to sovereign grace?

> Babes thither caught from womb and breast,
> Claim'd right to sing above the rest ;
> Because they found the happy shore
> They never saw nor sought before."

For just as all our species find misery entailed on them by the misdeed of one kinsman, so a multitude of Adam's children will find everlasting happiness secured to them by the righteousness of another Relative, with as little desert and as little consciousness on their part. In other words, if Heaven receive many adults who grew up to be wicked, but who by voluntarily accepting the Gospel merged their own wickedness in the Saviour's superabounding righteousness, it will receive a still larger accession from those little ones to whom, without any consciousness on their part, God has imputed the righteousness of their great Relative,—their Kinsman-Redeemer,—His own Son and their Second Adam.

2. Nor can we pass over this incident without remarking that as there is nothing to prevent an infant from being a child of God, so there is nothing to prevent an infant from being *a member of the Church of God*. Some of my brethren ask, "What warrant have you to admit the infants of believers into the Christian Church?" I ask, "What warrant have you to turn them out?" When the Son of God came to earth He found a church existing. Of that church not only upgrown believers, but their little ones, were members. That Church, with all its faults of administration, was still the Church of God, and the Lord Jesus joined it, and He joined it in His infancy. True, He Himself set up another Church, but that other

Church was virtually an expansion and a spiritualization of the old one. There was still a chosen generation,—a *holy* nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood,—and the question just is, "Are the privileges of the Christian Church equal to those of its Hebrew predecessor? Federally, in respect of a covenant relation to God, is the child of a New Testament believer on as good a footing as the child of an Old Testament saint; and in joining Christ's Church, with its new and better promises, may I claim as much for my children as in joining the old church of Moses? A centurion, or Roman proselyte, who has joined the commonwealth of Israel, and been allowed to bring his children with him, in joining the Church of Christ must he leave those children outside the door? Or, just as he was allowed to have all his household circumcised in the one case, so may he have all that household baptized in the other?

Mark our position. We have said there is nothing to prevent an infant from being a member of the visible Church. Those infants whom Jesus now took in His arms were members of the visible Church. They had received the seal of God's covenant before they showed any symptom of faith, or gave any assurance that they would not be renegades from the commonwealth of Israel. But God gave one of the most precious rewards to parental piety by extending the seal of His covenant to their new-born offspring, and Jesus Himself had been in His own infancy formally admitted a member of the only true Church then on the earth. Where is the hint that this system must cease? Where in passing over from

the one dispensation to the other, where is the hint that the infant members already in the Church of Moses must be excluded from the Church of Messiah?

Or take it another way. You see these infants in the arms of Jesus. You see the gracious Redeemer smiling over them, and putting His hands on them, and blessing them? You hear Him saying: "Suffer them to come to me, for of such is the *kingdom of God*." A few months after He says to His Apostles, "Go and make disciples of all nations," that is, "Go and bring into *God's kingdom* all nations, baptizing them;" and the Apostles go. Next year they are preaching in this very neighbourhood. They make many converts. We shall suppose that among them are some of the parents now present. They believe that Jesus is the Christ. They become disciples. They enter God's kingdom, the visible Church, by this door of Baptism. And they are about to bring their little ones also. But the apostles "rebuke" them. They refuse to baptize mere babes. Their commission only extends to "Believers' Baptism." Strange, if we had been heathens becoming Jews, you would have extended the ratifying rite to our little ones. In receiving to that communion *us*, you would not have excommunicated *them*. And the Master would not have acted thus. You despise these little ones. You say that you cannot give them the badge of discipleship, nor formally admit them to God's kingdom. But these are the identical little ones whom Jesus has blessed. You won't open to them the kingdom's gate, but the King Himself has said: "Of such is the kingdom."

You will please to remember that Christ's charge, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," was addressed to Hebrew apostles. It was addressed, that is, not to Gentiles nor to antipædobaptists, but to Jews,—men to whom the idea of infant-membership in the Church was as familiar as the membership of adults. It was addressed to men who were accustomed to regard the children of believers as relatively "clean" or "holy," and as in a case entirely different from those outside the favoured commonwealth. Consequently, had it been the Saviour's desire to exclude infants from all ecclesiastical standing, in giving the baptismal commission to Jewish apostles there should have been a precise and express prohibition: "Go and baptize all nations. Go and baptize all believers, but beware that you do not sprinkle any Babes." Without some such prohibition they would have been almost sure to do it, and without a pointed prohibition, Hebrew converts would have been almost sure to ask the ordinance for their little ones. "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed," was to a true Israelite the dearest and most precious of all the promises, the great federal engagement which had associated his children and himself in covenant relation to God. Was that promise cancelled? Was a privilege so dear to a believing parent done away in Christ? Ten days passed over. Ten days had elapsed since the baptismal commission was issued. The Holy Ghost was given, and the great Christian mission began, and to his audience of five thousand awakened penitents, all Jews or Jewish proselytes, all familiar with the idea of infant Church-member-

ship, all clinging with a fond intensity to the great federal promise on which that infant Church-membership was founded, in the first Christian sermon ever preached, Peter exclaimed: "Repent and be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you, and *to your children.*" Publishing the salvation of the Gospel covenant, and summoning that convinced assembly to Christian Baptism, Christ's Apostles, endowed with power from on high, maintain that the old connexion between parents and children still subsists. What would be the inference of their Hebrew auditors? What else could it possibly be, but that, like the Abrahamic covenant, the covenant of Christian Baptism was broad enough to take in not only the up-grown proselyte, but his children too?[1]

When from the Saviour's directions we proceed to the Apostles' doings, it is not only at Pentecost, but all along, that we find our view borne out by the primitive practice; nothing contradicting it, all harmonizing with it. Whenever the head of a family is baptized, we find the Apostles baptizing his household also. Paul baptized not only Stephanas, but his household. Lydia was baptized, and her household. As soon as the jailer professed his faith in Christ, he and *all his* were baptized straightway. And although the opponents of Infant Baptism, or Family Baptism, although they will answer that no little children are expressly mentioned in these households, I think it rather falls to *them* to prove that there were none. And at any rate, I must say that it looks likest the Acts of the Apostles, when in the correspond-

[1] Wilson on Baptism, 505.

ence of a modern missionary, I read—what I never read in the periodical accounts of our Baptist brethren—the baptism of a family or household. With the views which they hold, Dr. Carey could never write home that he had baptized a household at Serampore; nor, with all his zeal and success, could Dr. Judson, that the jailer at Rangoon had professed his faith in Christ, and that he and all his had been baptized straightway.

We may just add, that as far as Church history is of any moment, it shows that from the earliest period, Infant Baptism was the universal practice; and even the Catacombs at Rome contribute their ray of light, and show the graves of infants who were baptized 1500 years ago.

With a profound respect for our Baptist brethren, loving many who are still alive, revering the memory of many who are gone, conscious of the noble contributions which have been made to theological literature, and to the cause of the Gospel, by men like Bunyan and Gill and Fuller, and Robert Hall and the Haldanes, and bearing my humble tribute to the sacrifices on the shrine of conviction which others have made,—sacrifices which do honour to our common Christianity, I feel that in this matter there is an error in their entire position. They ask for a positive precept, when they should be content if there is no positive prohibition. Church history is against them. The Acts of the Apostles are against them. The analogy of the Dispensation is against them. All general principles are against them.

And if, without any positive precept, they feel safe in admitting their wives and daughters to the Communion Table, they would be safe, we think, in bringing their children to the Baptismal Font without any positive precept. At least we feel no difficulty. We feel that the Church cannot err in receiving into its arms those whom the Saviour embraced in His own. We feel that the New Testament Church cannot err in receiving as its inmates those who were members of the Old Testament Church, and who are to be members of the Church in heaven.

3. This incident shows how willing the Saviour is to take the little children and bless them, if we really bring them to Him. We cannot over-estimate His grace and power, but we may mistake our own dispositions. We may fancy that we are willing to give our children to Jesus, when our real wish regarding them is like the one we have regarding ourselves,—a wish to get salvation, and withal the world into the bargain. If in this matter our eye is single, if for them we are seeking first of all the Kingdom of Heaven and the righteousness thereof, we must be consistent; we must seek to be not half-hearted, but honest; we must seek to carry it through and through. We must strive to feel on our children's behalf, as well as our own, What will it profit to gain the world, and lose the soul? To be clever, to be rich, to be beautiful, is sometimes an advantage, but without the grace of God such advantages have often proved a positive perdition. Purity of heart, high principle, conscientious industry, a

deferential duteousness, a truth which no terrors can concuss, an integrity which no filthy lucre can seduce,—these are gifts of God, and when springing from a God-fearing, Christ-loving piety, these are not only preservatives from many sorrows, but indications that the Holy Spirit is forming a character which Heaven shall receive and consummate.

Then bring your little children to the Saviour. Place them in His arms. Devote them to His service. Born in His camp, let them wear from the first His colours; and bring them up with the feeling that none other has any right to them save the Captain of Salvation. Taking advantage of timely opportunities, and with all tenderness of spirit, seek to endear to them the Friend of Sinners, the Good Shepherd of the lambs, the loving Guardian of the little children. And not only teach them, but govern them. Do not give them their own way, except it is the right way. And in order to govern them, govern yourselves.

4. Beware of hindering those children who would go to Jesus. Better were it for a man that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea, than that he should offend the heart of Christ's little ones. It is a fearful thing to hinder those who might otherwise have gone to the Saviour. It is a fearful thing to be accessory to another's eternal ruin. It would be a fearful thing if a child showed some sign of piety, it would be a fearful guilt to check it. The infidel tutor, the profligate guardian of the orphan, the nurse

who teaches a child to say bad words or to lie, and who, without thinking, is making that little one a child of hell, is treasuring up a dreadful reckoning against the day of righteous retribution. But oh, my dear friends, how unspeakably awful, if those who hinder a child from going to the Saviour, are those very parents who should have brought him to Christ's arms! And are there not many parents who have bright and intelligent children, fond of hearing the Bible story, amiable, affectionate, imitative, eager to do as their elders do, but no means are taken to turn their feet into the paths of holiness and peace? Are there not many children, next door to some Christian household, who might say, "Father, we would have gone to Jesus, but your sabbath-breaking, your love of drink, your savage temper, your neglect of family worship, forbade us? Mother, we would have gone to Jesus, had you been like Hannah or Eunice; had you taught us to pray, had you taught us hymns and Bible verses. But your ambition, your love of dress, your love of pleasure hindered us. Your fondness for cards and company, for the ball-room and the theatre, it was that which suffered us not."

"See Israel's gentle Shepherd stand
With all-engaging charms!
Hark! how He calls the tender lambs
And folds them in His arms.

'Permit them to approach,' He cries,
'Nor scorn their humble name;
For 'twas to bless such souls as these
The Lord of Angels came.'

We bring them, Lord! in thankful hands,
And yield them up to Thee;
Joyful that we ourselves are Thine,
Thine let our offspring be.

If orphans they are left behind,
Thy guardian care we trust;
That care shall heal our bleeding hearts,
If weeping o'er their dust." [1]

[1] Doddridge.

SERMON XXI.

GOD MANIFEST IN HIS SON.

"God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."—HEB. I. 1-4.

GOD, who in many portions, and in many modes, spake in ancient times unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by a SON, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who, being the effulgence of His glory, and the express image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself made atonement for our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High; being made so much superior to the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they.

A Son!—the Son!—God's Son! is the emphatic word in this passage, and it is the key to the whole of this Epistle.

God had spoken to the fathers, but that older revelation was fragmentary. It came by instalments. One "portion" came through Moses, another through David, another through Isaiah. So partial and progressive was it that at least a thousand years transpired betwixt Moses and Malachi,—the first portion and the last. But when Jesus was manifested to Israel in His person, God stood revealed at once and entirely. In these last days there had burst forth on the world a disclosure of Deity, full-orbed and complete: a revelation not dispersed through nine-and-thirty volumes of Holy Writ, but concentred in the person of God's incarnate Son.[1]

God had spoken to the fathers, but that older revelation was miscellaneous. It came in many modes. There was Jehovah's autograph on the two Tables of Stone, and there was a Theology, partly pictorial, partly pantomimic, in the Temple and its services. There was Ezekiel's vision, and Daniel's dream, and David's enraptured psalmody. And all tended to throw light on the Divine perfections, and make the Most High better known. Yet none by itself, nor even the whole united, were satisfactory and soul-contenting. Not one of all these modes, nor all of them together, solved each query of the thoughtful spirit: "My soul thirsteth for God, the Living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." "Show us the Father, and it

1 "God gave His revelation in parts—piecemeal—as you teach a child to spell a word—letter by letter, syllable by syllable, adding all at last together. God had a word to spell—His own Name. By degrees He did it. At last it came entire. The Word was made Flesh."—Robertson's *Sermons*, 2d Series, p. 153.

sufficeth us." With all the advantages of Old Testament light, such were still the longings of earnest spirits: but in those last days God heard not such longings. Veiling His Majesty, He had come and dwelt among us. A Son, His express image, had come and lived on earth, and in the "mode" the most express and assuring, He revealed the Father. We saw how God lives. We saw how He is not an abstraction, or an attribute, but a living person. We saw how God loves, and pities, and consoles. We saw how God dislikes pretence, and hypocrisy, and self-sufficiency; how He delights in humility, ingenuousness, and a believing or trustful disposition. We saw how God pardons sin, and how by long-suffering and wisdom He cures infirmity and elevates into the beauty of holiness characters which, as He found them, were feeble, selfish, and unlovely.

And now that God has spoken in His Son, the Revelation is not only precise and explicit, but it is supremely authoritative, and peculiarly kind and sympathetic. On the one hand, its sanctions are as august as its Author is Divine; on the other, its tone is as tender as the Speaker is brotherly. The Son of God became the Son of Man, and whilst the Deity of the Saviour says, "Take heed!" the sympathy of that Saviour says, "Take courage!" "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord?" But "seeing that we have a great High Priest that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession, and let us come with confidence unto the throne of grace." Or, as we have both combined in

one passage,—"For ye are not come unto the mount that could be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and tempest; but ye are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Fulness, Finality, Fellow-feeling,—such are the three great characteristics of the Gospel economy, with its filial Mediator,—and such are the three great thoughts which run through this wonderful Epistle. The nail fastened in a sure place, the staple to which this threefold cord is fastened, is that great word—"GOD'S SON."

If we now revert for a little to the case of the persons to whom this Epistle was addressed, we shall see a further force and propriety in its pervading idea. These persons had been born and brought up in Judaism, and they had embraced Christianity; but they were strongly tempted to renounce the Gospel, and return to their former religion. The fervour of first love, the joyful days of their conversion were over; and a powerful assault was made on their Christian steadfastness. Whilst some were visited by that coarser persecution which lays its hand on person and property, others were victims in their holiest feelings, and found it sad to be severed from the dearest of kindred, and from those with whom they used to hold the sweetest of fellowship; and not a few had the trial, more fearful than any—a misgiving lest they might be wrong after all,

a misgiving which acquired a terrible force from the sacredness of the old institution, and from the circumstances that that old institution was still a glaring fact, a stubborn reality, which, with its stately temple and pompous solemnities, showed no tendency to dissolve and disappear.

Very admirable is the skill which meets these various temptations, material, social, intellectual. The first—the coarser and more common consideration of temporal ease and advantage—is crushed and overborne by the tremendous exigency of the case, the surpassing majesty of the Saviour, and the hopelessness of his condition who, for any selfish reason, abjures the Son of God. The more amiable infirmity of relative or ecclesiastical affection is corrected and countervailed by the stronger spell of a new attraction: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking away unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down on the right hand of the throne of God." "Jesus suffered without the gate. Let us go therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city." And the sorer, deeper difficulty, the intellectual misgiving, the mental surmisings, the rationalistic reluctance—to these the whole Epistle is the answer and the antidote. Its object is to show that, good and true as Judaism heretofore had been, it owed its value to the higher truth it pioneered, and to the coming mercy it involved. But now that the casket had opened and given forth the gem—now that the chrysalis had split and launched into

the light its radiant occupant—now that the mould had severed and turned out the celestial counterpart to Moses, Aaron, and Melchisedec, he was the rich man who to the casket preferred the pearl—the wise man who let go the Law with its dried and papery slough, and went after the living Gospel. He was the Israelite indeed who found his Aaron in the Son of God, and who allowed Moses to conduct him to the Prince of prophets and leave him with Messiah.

To use one of its own expressions, the whole of this Epistle is a "looking unto Jesus;" and it derives its peculiar value from its showing us how all things under the Law looked to Jesus also; how the Levitical ritual, the ceremonial cleansings, the prophecies of seers, the sacrifices of priests, and the functions of theocratic princes, were a prediction and an expectation of that Son of the Highest who should be the Revealer of God, the Reconciler of God and man, and the Ruler of His own redeemed and regenerate kingdom.

The glory of this last Messenger and Manifester of the Godhead fills the remaining context.

Not only is He God's well-beloved Son, but in connexion with His great mediatorial function all power has been given Him in heaven and on earth. He has been appointed "heir" or proprietor of all things, and it is by His immediate agency that God made the universe. He is the true Shechinah. Israel was proud of the glory that dwelt between the cherubim; but that "brightness" was only a flickering flame. Jesus was the brightness of God's glory. As was evinced on the top of Tabor, He could

have had the earth in perpetual transfiguration, and the effulgence which for one brief hour He then forbore to repress, might have been His constant attire. But although a perpetual halo had hovered around His head, although like Moses on the mount His face had shone with dazzling lustre, although He had worn a vesture of sunbeams, it would not have given an idea of the Light of Lights so just and true as the purity, the gentleness, the omnipotent benevolence in which Jesus walked the world, "the express image of God's subsistence," the facsimile of the Father, impressed with each feature of absolute Deity, and so the incarnate exhibition of the invisible Supreme. This Son of God, so glorious in Himself, and officially so exalted—for as the eternal Son He is the governor of the universe, and upholds all things by the word of His power—this Son of God became the expiator of transgression. "By Himself," in His own body on the tree, by His one infinite and divinely-effective sacrifice, He made atonement for sins,[1] and then in that nature which He had assumed in order to render atonement, He returned to the right hand of the Father, and as Mediator resumed the place of pre-eminence far above the angels, which had formerly belonged to Him as the only-begotten Son.

It is of great importance for us to get right views of the Mediator's majesty; and in order to get the full comfort of the great salvation, it is essential that we begin our survey on the right side of the Incarnate Mystery. "The Word was made flesh;" and as we ourselves are human,

[1] Καθαρισμὸν ποιησάμενος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν — according to Septuagint idiom, "having made atonement for sins."

it is with the humanity of Jesus that we have first to do. Study the Gospel narrative. Get a conception as clear as possible of the Man Christ Jesus. Try to feel towards Him as a candid and ingenuous contemporary would have felt. Let His words and actions speak for themselves, and say whether if you had then been living you would have liked Him. Attracted by a sanctity so unsanctimonious, and encouraged by an affability so endearing, would you have been apt to attach yourself to His society, and would you have tried to ascertain in intercourse with Him the secret of His own unbroken blessedness, the ingredients in His continual feast of benevolent feeling, the means of maintaining His habitual walk with God? Would you have liked to learn from Him a lesson of meekness and lowlihood, and would you have allowed Him to do with you whatever was needed to give rectification to your character and rest to your soul?

If so—if you have taken on the full impress of the kindness, endearingness, condescension of John and Peter's Master, you are prepared to profit by the further disclosure. You are prepared to get all the comfort which comes from knowing that this most tender-hearted and magnanimous of the sons of men is a great deal more than the Son of Mary. You are relieved and rejoiced to find that this Teacher, the least formidable of all the prophets, is the most enlightened and authoritative—the dearest to God and the nearest to heaven. You are delighted to ascertain that the most loveable of all human beings, the most compassionate, the most congenial to the heart's deepest cravings, and the most adapted to our

nature's necessities, is not only the likest to God, but is indeed God's chosen likeness—His image express. And you are surprised and affected to find that of all men the Man who had the promptest pardon for the sinner, and the kindest look for the culprit confessing, is He "who did no sin" Himself, and who is the representative and envoy of the all-holy Jehovah.

And proceeding further still: You see this man, so innocent, so merciful, so loving,—you see Him on the cross. Still looking on the human side, you see that He has carried to that cross all His sweetness of disposition, all His kind-heartedness and compassion. In His considerateness for His mother, in His prayers for the insulting rabble, in the comforting words He addresses to the rough but relenting criminal at His side, He displays a depth of strange generosity—perhaps the only instance on record where pity was the ruling passion strongest in death. Surely His kindness cannot be questioned, and as you gaze at Him in your need, in the words of the old hymn it may safely be said

"He *will* do for you what He can."[1]

But what can He do? From what you have already seen of His disposition, you cannot doubt His good-will; and now the question is as to His ability. What can He do? Would you know what He is doing? In this very instant of extremest weakness He is accomplishing the greatest work that has ever been achieved in this world of ours. Great is His suffering, and it is suffering on account of

[1] Gude and Godly Ballads.

sin. Great is His suffering, and He is a great Sufferer, infinitely greater than meets the eye. That Sufferer is the Son of God, and those sufferings are the first instance of a true sacrifice. Even now, as the dying tremor quivers over all His frame, He is finishing transgression and making an end of sins. And now, as He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, even now He abolished death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

This Epistle is addressed to catechumens or converts well acquainted with the Saviour's human history, but who were in danger of forgetting or faintly realizing His intrinsic glory. But amongst those who believe the Godhead of the Saviour, the danger is from the contrary quarter. As has been remarked by a believer lately departed: "I feel that one reason why many real Christians do not go on their way rejoicing is, that they *deify* the humanity of Christ. They feel that they are coming to a holy God, who cannot look on sin without infinite displeasure; and the view of Jesus repels them, and throws them back, whereas Jesus is the very same Jesus that He was when He walked the streets of Jerusalem. Though His body is glorified, He is not altered. His heart is still the same,—full of sympathy and love,—ready to listen to all we have to say to Him, and to do all we ask Him to do, and in the best possible way." [1]

"They deify the humanity of Christ." Or rather, we would say, they invert God's order. They study the deity of the Saviour before they look to His humanity. The ladder's foot is on the earth, but they want first to

[1] Mrs. Mary Winslow.

get to Heaven, where its top is, and so travel the ladder downwards. And this is the way that the Incarnation is viewed by God, and it is thus that Christ is "seen of angels" (1 Tim. iii. 16). But this is no proper method for us. Our right course is to begin with what comes nearest ourselves, and surely that is the ladder's foot, that is the man Christ Jesus. And when through intimacy with the Christ of Evangelists we have got, by God's blessing, a profound acquaintance with the Saviour's disposition, how grateful, how welcome comes the growing disclosure of His oneness with the Father! the progressive discovery of His inherent glory, His right to pardon, His power to intercede, His omnipotence to save! And thus from contemplation of the man like ourselves, shall we rise to the knowledge of Him whom no man hath seen, and by the gentle steps of this wondrous stair-case mount from the cold midnight of Luz to the sunshine of the Light inaccessible.

Begin with the Gospels. Read the sweet story of Jesus as recorded by their unerring pen, who, when His words first were spoken, and His wonders were first performed, were spectators and listeners very like what you yourself would have been. And then when, through the grace of God's Spirit taking the things of Jesus and showing them to your soul, when you have got a right perception of the Saviour's pity, tenderness, forgivingness, you will be ready for the glorious outburst which opens this Epistle, and as you realize how this "fairest of the children of men" is withal the Son of the Highest, as under the beauteous career of Jesus you recognise the

manifestation of Deity, and in the Friend of sinners as you discern the Possessor of Immensity, the Administrator of the Universe, the Creator of Worlds, affection will kindle into adoration, and in the rapture which recognises in the condescending companion and teacher your Lord and your God, faith will be perfected. Your love will be none the less for the reverence which mingles with it, and your confidence in His grace and kindness will become none the less because the meek and lowly Jesus has grown the great Immanuel.

But, as we said, this Epistle assumes a certain acquaintance with the Saviour's outward history. It supposes that the readers know what it is that God has spoken in His Son, and its object is to impress the lesson. Its object is on the basis of the Historic Christ to found a Christian theology and a practical piety. By giving right views of Christ's person and mission, its object is to overawe levity, and to minister to feeble faith a strong consolation. It is a serious thing to treat with contempt the Gospel message, for, meek and lowly as He was, the Deliverer of that message is no ordinary prophet. He wears a human form. He looks on us with gentle human eyes. He speaks the vernacular of the Holy Land, but He is God's co-eternal Son, the upholder of the universe, the Creator of worlds; and what He says and does are final. Having made an expiation for sins, He is set down on God's right hand for ever. There is no more that even Immanuel can do. This is Love's extremest effort, God's last and greatest gift, God's own sacrifice. Can there be any escape for those who neglect so great salvation?

On the other hand, you are prepossessed with Jesus of Nazareth. To you He is a teacher come from God. You admire His life, so beautiful and blameless, and you can press to your reverential lips His words, so pure and holy ; and you would give all that you possess to rise up to a life that would be the repetition of His own :—a life of golden sincerity, a life beaming with beneficence and bright with the friendship of God. But you know not how to take the initial step. You know not how to slough the sinful past. You know not how to put off the old man with his affections and lusts. You know not how to cut asunder the identity which connects your guilty history with your present self. But Christ has done it. Before He sat down at the right hand of God, He made an atonement for sins ; and now that He is at God's right hand, you have only to put yourself under His protection, and His sin-purging atonement will become your canopy. You have only to let go that guilty past as a ground of either hope or fear, and suffer it to be merged in Christ's mediation, and, absorbed into the Surety, it ceases to be yours. Identified with the Son of God, and expiated by Him, what was morally yours becomes legally His, and you are for ever released from its dangerous and deadly responsibility. Made righteous through your absorption into One who for your sake was made sin, you have peace with God, and from the starting-post of an imputed righteousness, which is the same thing with a virtual innocence, there stretches before you the radiant path of a new and joyful obedience. Run in that path. Seek to be pure as Christ is pure.

Seek to be kind, communicative, self-mastering, as Christ pleased not Himself, but continually did good. And if at any time you falter; if you fear that ten, twenty, forty years of temptation are more than you can struggle through on the way to Heaven, "consider how great this man is." Consider the Apostle and High Priest of your profession, sitting at the right hand of God, watchful for your progress, and solicitous to carry you through. Consider that He who has undertaken to carry your acquittal, and to keep your soul, is God's beloved Son. Consider that however much reason a holy God may have to be displeased with you, He has infinitely greater reason to be pleased with Him. Consider that however worthless your prayers are in themselves, there is nothing of which Immanuel is not worthy, and nothing of which Immanuel is worthy which in His name a sinner may not ask.

SERMON XXII.

ANGELIC MINISTRY.

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"—HEB. I. 14.

LET us throw ourselves back into the apostolic age, and consider the case of two Christian converts.

The first was born and brought up a heathen. In embracing the Gospel he has had to make some sacrifice. His family is affronted, and his neighbours are angry. If a lawyer, he has lost many clients; if a trader, he has lost many customers. By the waggish he is twitted for being a Jew; by the bigots he is accused of becoming a bad citizen. But he has no inward misgivings. His understanding is satisfied, his conscience is calm; and if it should ever occur to him to ask, "Am I right in leaving the faith of my fathers?" he has only to open his eyes. He has only to look at the deified vices which his country adores—he has only to remember the material grossness and sensual pollutions which he himself has exchanged for the sanctity and the spiritual worship of the Christian religion, and there is an end of the matter. He has only to contrast the sober certainties of the Gospel with the cunning fables and confessed absurdities of the Pantheon

to feel that he is right, and that his revilers are wrong. "Yours is devil-worship, and the more devout you are the more it drags you downward. The liker to Venus, Mars, or Jupiter you become, the more degraded and embruted you are. But Christianity has made me a new creature. It has introduced me to a holy God, and every day it is drawing me up into a higher, purer life,—a life of righteousness, benevolence, and self-denial. And your religion is a lie; you do not yourself believe it; and the priests don't believe it. In quitting Paganism for the Gospel I have exchanged a lie for the truth, depravity for goodness, phantoms for realities, dumb idols for the living God."

But if such were the case of Rufus the Roman or Philologus the Greek, very different was the position of Nathanael the Hebrew. Whatever might be the new faith he had accepted, no one could say that it was a bad system or a false religion he had forsaken. And especially if he lived in the old ecclesiastical metropolis, the case could be put very powerfully. "O my son," might some fond parent or venerable Rabbi urge on the recent convert, "can it be that you have abandoned the faith of your fathers? Have you no fear of the judgment? Is it a light thing to forsake altars which have smoked for a thousand years, and a temple consecrated by the prayers of every saint and the strains of every prophet? You know how good and earnest many of your Hebrew brethren are; you will not deny that as an Israelite you were yourself sincere; you can still remember the sweet counsel you took with your brethren as you went to the house of

God in company; you remember the solemnity of great convocations, the gladness of new moons, the ecstasy of the feast of tabernacles. You believe Moses and the prophets; you know that Jehovah of Israel is the one living and true God; you know that the Law was given by Moses, the most favoured of prophets, and that it has all the sanction which ministering and attesting angels could give it. Beware, O my son, beware, lest when you fancy that you have found Messias you be only forsaking Moses; beware lest in this wild devotion to the crucified Nazarene you array against you those angels who are great in might—those celestial peers who gave their seal and sanction to the charter of God's one favoured nation. Surely you cannot err by keeping in the society of Moses, the prophets, and the angels, and as you have sadly erred in apostatizing from the faith of your fathers, redeem the error by a prompt and penitential return."

The hold which heathenism had was on the worldly interests or coarser appetites of the worshipper. Judaism had a strong hold on the heart and the conscience, and, amidst past recollections and surrounding urgencies, the case of a Hebrew Christian was often grave and anxious. It was not to be met—as the doubts of weak consciences and thoughtful spirits too often are met—by the *ipse dixit* of hale-hearted arrogance, or as the cavils of disputatious wilfulness ought to be met, with the burning rebuke of a righteous indignation; but it is here met with a wisdom not the less Divine for the candour and considerateness in which it is conveyed—with the fellow-feeling of one who, having passed the ordeal himself, to the Jew can

still speak as a Jew, and with the majesty of one who knows that the truth he speaks is God's own oracle.

The first four verses might almost suffice. They so exhibit the surpassing dignity of the Founder of the new dispensation, that all doubt and question might well fall mute amidst the thunder of their majesty. But sublime as is that opening outburst and suggestion of all the sequel, the inspired penman knew that it was needful to smooth each difficulty and obviate each objection in detail. He finds his reader shut up in a valley of Achor, and although, like some great detonating force, with expansive power and explosive suddenness the mighty truth has in the dizzy precipice split open a door of exit, to rend open that grand avenue it is not enough. The fragments must be reduced still further, and every valley must be filled, every stumbling-block must be taken out of the way, so as to make plain the path of the pilgrim, and leave no doubt nor difficulty. Far from a cruel alternative —a fatal choice of apostasies—the only way to remain in the Church of God was to graduate up into the Church of Christ; nor need any Hebrew be a renegade to Moses except by refusing that prophet like unto Moses, whom the great Lawgiver predicted, and from whom Moses himself received his commission.

It would seem that the Jews attached much importance to the part which the angels sustained in the giving of the Law. That Law their fathers had received by the disposition or ministry of angels. "The Lord came from Sinai; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints (or holy ones); from his

right hand went a fiery law."[1] "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place."[2] And it is not wonderful that this feature of the scene should have made a profound impression on the mind of the nation, and enhanced in their eyes their statute-book. There have been instances where monarchs gave to their people a code or constitution, and befitting solemnities marked its promulgation; but never was there such a spectacle as when the Hebrew million halted in the wilderness of Paran, and, after two days of reverent expectation amidst the listening solitudes, the third morning announced the near approach of the awful advent. Already invisible pioneers were preparing the throne of the Eternal on the mountain crest, and amidst the roll of ceaseless thunder on the sapphire pavement they spread the carpeting of cloud and raised the canopy of fire; and as the flame-like satellites flashed out and in around the dark pavilion, awe-struck, yet attracted, the people drew as near as the barrier suffered, till the last note of preparation ceased, and, amidst the pause the prophetic mount began to totter, and down its quivering ribs the rocks and gravel streamed; for there was now a prancing in the firmament, and the clash of seraph cymbals, and the tempest flight of nearer chariots, as lightnings lashed the air and nature swooned before its Maker's dreadful Majesty. And as the trumpet clear and long proclaimed the enthronement of Jehovah, no barrier was needful; from the skirts of the smoking mountain the living wave fell back, and up the trembling slopes the

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 2. [2] Ps. lxviii. 17.

one representative of the people pressed, till, drawn "into the thick darkness where God was," he vanished from his brethren's view.

And truly that great parliament derived a peculiar solemnity from the presence of these "powers and principalities;" and the national covenant, including the Ten Commands, and embodying God's promise of long life and prosperity to an obedient people—that covenant and that law ever after, in Israel's imagination, carried a memento of the burning mount and the angelic ministry. However homely was the copy of the book, and however rude the ark from which its scroll was taken in the synagogue, to the reverential eye it was still enwrapped in the thick cloud of Sinai and phosphorescent with its fire; and it needed no skill in the reader to call back the voice of its trumpet. Above all, it was a solemn rousing thought to remember that the Legislator's attendants were now the covenanters' witnesses. The law that was given by angelic ministry was followed up by angelic observation. Those intelligences, bright and holy, who had heard Jehovah say, "Have no other gods; Make no graven image; Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy; Honour father and mother; Covet no neighbour's property;" and who had heard the people answer, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do,"—those satellites of the great Law-giving, destined in their turn to be the heralds and pursuivants of the coming judgment, were now the spectators of the covenant-keepers. Nor was there an act of idolatry or profanity, a selfish "Corban" spoken to a father, or a bitter "Raca" hurled at a brother; there

was no false weight in the bag, no dishonest purpose in the heart, but found its note in the remembrance-book of the recording angel.

No wonder that the Hebrews attached surpassing sanctity to a law thus given, and felt that it would be a fearful thing to violate a covenant which not only issued from the throne of the Eternal, but to give grandeur and emphasis to which Jehovah had for once held court on earth, and marshalled so many of the highest peers of heaven, and to observe the carrying out of which was one main part of the angelic ministry.

Yet august and sacred as was the Law, the Apostle urges more sacred still and more august is the Gospel. And this he does, not on grounds which the Hebrews might question or controvert, but on grounds which he knew his correspondents must concede. He does not urge, for example, what *we* have every reason to believe, that the Legislator of Sinai was the Angel Jehovah—Himself the Son of God. Nor does he remind them of what was so conspicuous throughout the Saviour's earthly sojourn, the angelic ministry which, heralding His advent, hung over His cradle, watched His fight in the wilderness, and at its close refreshed His weary frame; which strengthened Him in His final agony, hovered over His mysterious sepulchre, and were His joyful escort home; for a Hebrew might have alleged that this was no more than these ministering spirits would have performed for any "heir of salvation," although merely human and mortal. But he falls back on ulterior considerations, and such as he felt ought, with his immediate readers, to be

especially conclusive. And his argument is substantially this :—"If you believe that Jesus is Messiah, and if you believe what Moses and the prophets say about Messiah, His authority is absolute; His voice will prevail above the voice of Moses, and the word spoken by Him will have a finality and fixedness not found in the word which angels spoke. Search the Scriptures; these furnish a theory of Messiah's person. They show beforehand what He will be when He comes, and they decide His rank —whether He is the inferior of angels, their mere equal, or their superior. Search and see. In passages which, by your own admission, refer to Messiah, what do they say? 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' Is that a mere angel? 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' Would that be said to angels regarding one in no respect their superior? 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.' 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands.' If, as you allow, this is Messiah, is not Messiah more than an angel? And if every word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect a salvation spoken by the Lord of angels,—by Him whose word spake Gabriel into being, and on whose word hang all the ranks of Seraphim?"

Reserving for a future opportunity these Old Testament quotations, we may bring together what the context says about the angels. "He makes his angels spirits (or winds), and his ministers a flame of fire." "Are they not

all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for the sake of those who shall be heirs of salvation?" "The word of the Law (or Sinai covenant) was spoken through angels," —where we have these things intimated: 1. Their office: they are God's stewards or "ministers." 2. Their effectiveness: for swiftness they are "winds;" for zeal and resistless power they are "flames of fire." 3. Their benevolence: they minister for the benefit of the heirs of salvation. 4. One special service they performed: they were concerned in the giving of the Law. Though "God spake all these words," in a certain sense the Law was "the word spoken by angels." "It is nowhere affirmed that the law was *given* by angels, but that the people received it 'by disposition of angels,' and that 'it was ordained by angels,' and here 'spoken by them.' Hence it is evident that what is ascribed to angels is not the original authoritative giving of the law, but the ministerial ordering of things in its promulgation. They raised the fire and smoke; they shook and rent the rocks; they framed the sound of the trumpet; they effected the articulate voices which conveyed the words of the Law to the ears of the people, and therein proclaimed and published the Law; whereby it became 'the word spoken by angels.'"[1]

The oblivion of great truths is sometimes the reaction of grievous errors. The Mary-worship of the Church of Rome has nearly obliterated from our calendar the name most conspicuous in New Testament female biography; and in the same way, in our protest against the angel-intercessors and angelic idols of Popery we are in danger of

[1] Owen, iii. 274.

forgetting the existence or denying the ministry of angels altogether.

Now, creature-worship is bad, whether that creature be a man or an angel. He was a bad man who, when the crowd shouted, "The voice of a god!" was pleased; and for accepting the worship he was eaten of worms. But he was a good man who, when Cornelius fell down at his feet and worshipped him, cried out, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." That was a bad angel who said to the Son of Mary, "All these kingdoms will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me;" but that was a good angel who, when John fell down adoringly, exclaimed, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant: worship God."

But although, like all loyal subjects, holy angels desire to concentrate on their eternal King the worship of the universe, and although they refuse to usurp the place of the one Mediator, in their nature, their functions, and their history, there is much to elevate our thoughts, and to reward our affectionate contemplation.

It is pleasant to think that there are beings, created and intelligent, who have kept their first estate. Amongst the weeds and loathly reptiles of our ruined temple, and all the frightful noises that rumble through its dank and dingy vaults, it is a comfort to remember that there is a temple still intact: a fane whose empyrean dome still rises on its shafts of sunshine, tall and fair, as when morning stars first filled its aisles with tuneful orisons. And, amidst the decay of earthly beauty and earthly goodness, it is a joy to remember that there is a created

beauty which has never dimmed, a created love which has never known a chill, a created loyalty which has never received a shock, nor been seen to falter. Gabriel has brothers older than the human race, brothers who saw Adam made, and who remember the launching of our planet, the first lighting of our sun. Yet the oldest of these is youthful still, no frost upon his pinions, no winter in his soul: for in all his vast remembrance he cannot remember the moment when he himself forgot that God is Love, or wished Him other than He is.

Amidst our slowness and stupidity, it is pleasant to remember that God has servants who understand all His will, and who can execute each fiat; angels who fly swift as wind, and who, for ready apprehension and ever-burning ardour, are flames of fire. And just as it is no less the hand of God, when He uses as His instrument a Cyrus, a David, or a Solomon, so surely it is no less His hand when as that instrument He employs a Michael or a Gabriel. And should it even turn out that much of the course of Providence is administered by these sons of God; should it be conceded that man is not the only creature to whose plastic touch matter is subservient; should it be held as probable that just as we know that angels have a music of their own, so in brighter worlds they may glorify God by a science, an architecture, a poetry truly seraphic, it will only put new force into the invocation, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure."

With our felt weakness and unworthiness, it is affecting to know that these angels, so swift, so strong, so holy, minister to the heirs of salvation. Not that this is their sole, or even their chief employ: nor that this ministry of theirs supersedes the Captain of Salvation, with His offices so kind and so precious; but just as in a well-ordered army or a well-governed realm there are sundry departments, and as that would be perfection where each fulfilled his own office, and where yet the superior governor was the animating source of every movement, and the pervasior of each detail, so Scripture hints that in His vast empire the Most High is everywhere present, and yet that it is by intermediate agents that the Lord of hosts carries out His designs and decrees. "All His saints are in His hand," nor are they in that hand the less because He gives His angels charge to keep them in all their ways. "In *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Lot and his family linger; but already the soil is sulphur, already the vengeance-drops begin to fall, when the kind angels grasp by the hand each child, grasp by the hand Lot and his partner, till they are borne beyond the reach of the burning rain. Daniel drops into the den; but though his descent is swift, and though swift is the spring of the roaring lion, swifter still is the flight of the guardian angel, and with a harmless crash locked is that lion's jaw. Jerusalem is beleaguered. Like a monstrous snake the Assyrian host begirds the city round and round, and as he tightens round the eyrie his coils of brass, and gapes over

it with his fangs of steel, nothing earthly can save the cowering, quivering nestlings, when

> "The angel of death spreads his wings on the blast,"

and, pierced with his meteor sword, the morning reveals in shattered fragments the cold and livid carcase of leviathan. Peter is in prison. So profound the cell, so strong the walls, which Hope has seldom entered, and captive more rarely quitted, that friends attempt no rescue, and Peter prays for none. The bolts are in the sockets, the warders are on watch, and chained to a soldier on either side sleeps the morrow's martyr. Nay, not so soon; not the morrow's martyr after all. For viewless as the air, secret as the "wind," an angel enters, and then revealed as a "flame of fire" guides Peter forth through dazzled keepers and self-opening doors to life and liberty

> "And is there care in Heaven? and is there love
> In heavenly spirits to these creatures bace,
> That may compassion of their evils move?
> How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
> To come to succour us that succour want!
> How oft do they with golden pineons cleave
> The flitting skyes, like flying pursuivant,
> Against fowle feendes to ayd us militant!
> They for us fight, they watch and dewly ward,
> And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
> And all for love, and nothing for reward:
> O why should heavenly God to men have such regard?[1]

Nor is it without solemnity to remember that much, if not all, of our conduct is open to the observation of angels. Says Paul regarding the Christian confessors, "We are made a spectacle to angels." His son Timothy he exhorts,

[1] Faery Queene, B. II. canto 8.

"I charge thee before God, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another; doing nothing by partiality." And writing to the worldly-minded and somewhat disorderly Church of Corinth, one of his themes is the decorum of their worshipping assemblies: "For this cause ought the woman to wear on her head the appropriate attire, because of the angels;" as much as if he had said, "If respect to the grave and sober-minded amongst yourselves is not sufficient to insure propriety, remember the angels"—those ministering spirits who are assuredly present when the heirs of salvation assemble for worship. In the spirit of which, says Solomon, "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel that it was an error."

And although it might well be restraint or incentive sufficient to remember, "Thou God seest me," we may find an occasional restorative to our sinking spirits, and a useful prop to our faltering resolution, in remembering that we are "seen of angels" also. If you are a Christian, at the period of your repentance there was joy in heaven among the angels of God, and the likelihood is that to one or more of these holy and sympathizing spirits you are an object of watchful interest still. Like Hagar in the wilderness, directed to the fountain, the time that your eyes were opened to some important discovery, it may have been God the Holy Spirit who sent His angel to raise your head and guide your eye; and like the Captain of Salvation, to whom angels lent support amidst His agony, and to whom they ministered after His victory

over the great adversary, that support in pain, that comfort after conflict, which the heir of salvation from time to time experiences, is none the less the gift of the Comforter, if occasionally He sends it by the hands of an angel. And when at last the angels come to convey your departing spirit to Abraham's bosom, depend upon it, however dazzling in their newness *they* may be to you, you will find that your history is no novelty, and you yourself no stranger to them.

SERMON XXIII.

MAKING SALVATION SURE.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."—2 PETER I. 10.

RELIGIOUSNESS consists very much in referring things to the source Supreme. Its fundamental axiom is,

"All glory be to Him from whom all glories are;"

and there is not an act nor an incident which it does not somehow or other connect with the Hand Divine. To an outside view, to an eye that looks on from the under surface, it seems very much a scene of chance-medley—a chapter of accidents; here an archer bending his bow, and there an angler dropping his hook; here a traveller approaching the town, there a pilgrim plodding on through the desert; here slave-dealers making their bargain, yonder a monarch issuing his random decree. So it looks as we grope and wander through the labyrinth, but very different when we climb the mound in the centre, or look down from the throne, the watch-tower at the summit. There the mighty maze assumes a pattern, and exhibits its plan; there every incident is seen holding on by its several clue, and divinely guided to its predestined terminus. The archer bends his bow, and it is a random shaft which whizzes from the

string, but an unerring Eye has fixed the mark and lodges in a tyrant's breast the arrow. It is a random hook which drops into the lake, but it is caught by the only fish of all the world which can supply the wished-for coin. It seems an unlikely way to send the Gospel into a palace, to send the evangelist into a desert, and a round-about road for introducing that Gospel into Europe to send a persecuting fanatic on a journey to Damascus; but in that desert Philip finds the Queen of Ethiopia's chamberlain, on that road to Damascus the Lord Jesus finds His chosen vessel, who shall carry His name into the tents of Japhet. It seems a pity that these ruthless traders should be allowed to carry off that pious youth to pagan Egypt, but there is no other way to preserve alive the peculiar people freighted with the world's mysterious benison; and very hard it seems, that for the pride of counting up a conquered province, the Roman tyrant should order every Hebrew to his ancestral haunt at whatever sacrifice; and yet it is the only way to exalt Bethlehem-Ephratah to its predicted glory as the Incarnation's cradle—the threshold over which Heaven should come down to Earth.

Hence in every occurrence, in every outcome, the devoutest minds have the comfort of recognising God, and they can think and speak of matters as His doing, in which others see nothing but a creature's power or a creature's purpose. According to them it is not so much the flute which makes the melody as the musician who plays it; it is not so much the pen which makes the book as the hand which guides that pen, and the mind which sets that hand in motion.

So, coming to the case of a Christian, there are two ways of looking at him. You may look up to him, or across to him, from a mere human standing-point, and then you call him a believer, a saint, a disciple, a follower of the Saviour; or you may look down on him, so to speak, from a Divine standing-point, and then you see not so much what he does as what God does in him, what God makes him, and you call him one born from above—a child of God, a chosen vessel, one of the elect, one of the sanctified, one of those whom God has called to be saints. And this last way of speaking is the truest, the highest, and most really God's own way, and although the abuse of it has helped to make it in ordinary discourse distasteful, it is the kind of language which we are constrained to employ when we speak to God Himself.

In this passage the apostle might have said, "Give diligence to make your salvation sure," for that is his meaning; but he delights to remember, that in its truest sense salvation is God's work, and so his homely and practical address he suddenly loops up, and at this point fastens it aloft to a high theology. "Brethren, give diligence," says the believer, speaking across to his believing brothers; "give diligence to insure your calling and election," says the penman of the Holy Spirit, speaking down to those in whom God works to will and to do of *His* good pleasure.

In a sinner's salvation God is all in all. That salvation dates from God's eternal purpose. For its origin we must go as far back as the counsels of eternity, when He, who of all Sovereigns is the least arbitrary but the most ab-

solute, announced His design of saving mercy. And as the root runs back into eternity, so the blossom appears in time. A day arrives when God *calls* His *elect*, and they come—calls them by the Holy Spirit, speaking to them in the Gospel, and, made a willing people in that day of power, they come to Him who calls them. Corresponding with the effectual call on God's side, we have, on the sinner's side, conversion, or the turning God-ward; and the two together, the calling in time and the election in eternity, so entirely God's own gracious doing, are in celestial language, and the language of this passage, synonymous for *Salvation*. No man has such a bias, such a predilection towards God, that he would go to God unless God *called* and inclined him; no man has such intrinsic and independent holiness—such a stock of anterior innocence and personal virtue, that he would get to Heaven unless God was graciously pleased and resolved to bring him thither. The grace which *elects* or chooses the unworthy, and so rescues them from ruin—the grace which *calls* or inclines the reluctant, and so makes them willing—this is the grace or kindness of God our heavenly Father, which comes forth and brings us salvation.

Now this salvation may be insured. "Give diligence and make it sure." Which is as much as if the apostle had said, "I am sure of God: would that I were only sure of you. His calling only awaits your compliance. Let me see your diligence, your progress in piety, and I shall have no misgiving as to your election."

Well, my dear hearers, is it not a great happiness that what is so essential can be made so secure? There are

some things very desirable which we cannot absolutely count upon. You might like very much to be sure of some great man's favour, but you may not know how to gain his good graces, or you may not be able to rely altogether on his promises; but if you desire the friendship of the King of Kings, the Disposer of your eternal destinies, it is open to you to obtain a place in His loving-kindness now and for all eternity. You might like to make sure of health. "Doctor, if you could only promise me a cure. It is a great sacrifice to leave my family and go abroad for all the winter, but if you will undertake that I shall come back without this thorn in the flesh, this cloud on my spirits, there cannot be two thoughts about it,—I'm off directly;" but if you desire spiritual soundness, God guarantees it. Place yourself under the guidance of His Word and Spirit, and you will forthwith be a convalescent, conscious of incipient recovery, and ere long free from sin altogether in those realms where the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick." And you might like to insure some provision for life's future,—a competence for your own declining years, and after all you may be unable, like the little vineyard on the mountain face, to which basket by basket the husbandman has carried soil through all the arduous year, and which is washed away in a moment by the waterspout,—your accumulations, your self-denying savings may be swept into immensity by one of those circular storms which, ever whirling overhead, occasionally dip down and devastate all our commerce. But provide for eternity,—provide for your immortal years, and what you intrust to

the Saviour's keeping is deposited in a bank that cannot break; it is riches that will never take wing, but which will await the hour when you yourself take wing and flee away to it,—a treasure which, amidst earth's panics, will help to keep your mind in perfect peace,—a treasure in a *safe*, fire-proof, robber-proof, for it is where thieves break not through to steal, and, like your own immortal soul, it will survive when the elements are melting in the fervent heat.

How is it to be done?

In order to make sure one's own salvation, our first counsel is, Be sure of the great foundation truths. You believe that there is a God, and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. You believe that He is infinitely wise and good, true and holy. You believe that your own soul is immortal, that just as Moses and Elias were living when they appeared to Christ on Tabor, so you yourself will be living long ages after your body has ceased to be recognised in these haunts of mortality. And you believe that you are a sinner, that you entirely lack that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord; and that if you are ever admitted to the abodes of purity, it must be on some other ground than your own fitness or deserving. And you believe that in order to make a blessed immortality attainable to the sons of Adam, the Son of God became the Son of Man,—our kinsman,—in order to be our Redeemer, and that as the representative of His adopted brethren He rendered an obedience to God's law as comprehensive as the commandment is broad, and as unsullied as that commandment is

holy, and crowned and completed it all by bearing our sins in His own body on the tree,—in that death-penalty discharging our debt, and in that most precious blood of His quenching the wrath which our crimes had kindled, and so making it a just thing in God to justify the ungodly, when that ungodly one takes his stand on the finished work of Immanuel.

The best evidence that you know these things, and are persuaded of them, is that you are acting upon them. And are you sure of this? Are you so sure that God is satisfied with the work of the Great Substitute that, although often dismayed and distressed at your own unworthiness, you are still able to cherish hope towards God? and have you that confidence in the atonement that, confronting your own grievous guilt, over its mighty heap, its mountain mass, you can still espy the heaven-piercing pinnacles of God's mercy, and still lift your eyes to that higher hill whence cometh your help? Are you so "well pleased" with that Sun of Righteousness who sheds new lustre over the holy law, whilst He chases away the shadows of our guilt, who at once makes God's justice doubly venerable and His mercy doubly dear, that since you knew about Him there has been a day-spring in your heart, and the blessed recollection of what He is and what He has done (as long as you retain it) keeps up the summer of your soul?

And as the best evidence that yours is the Christian faith, be sure that yours is the Christian character. This exhortation follows a well-known context. Addressing those who have been "called to glory and virtue," he

bids them "give all diligence, and add to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance," etc., and gives this reason for it: "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The fifth verse and the tenth are parallels. In each the Christian is called to "give diligence" with a view to certain ends, and these ends are substantially and ultimately the same. Give diligence so as to put your salvation beyond all doubt or question, says the tenth verse. "And how is that to be done?" you ask, and the fifth verse replies by anticipation, "Give diligence, and add to your faith every Christian excellence." You say that the Rock of Ages is reliable, and that it is on Him your soul is resting its eternal hopes. If so, the Church of God may rest its hopes on you. If your faith is genuine, then, like good material, it will stand a heavy superstructure. There may be added to it temperance, patience, godliness, and every grace. You say that it is into the true vine you are engrafted. If so, you will be a living branch, exhibiting not only the leaves of profession, but producing the fruits of righteousness,—sterling excellencies of character, and these excellencies the very opposites of your formerly besetting sins, the former facility and faint-heartedness replaced by energy and courage, the sensuality expelled by temperance, the petulance or peevishness by patience, the indevotion, the irreverence, by godliness, the harshness and inhumanity by brotherly-kindness, the censoriousness and envy by charity.

Such, my dear friends, is the exhortation of the text

The thing to be made sure of is Salvation. And what again is Salvation? It is *health of soul.* It is that delicious feeling in which the pardon of the past mingles with incipient sanity, the one reacting on the other; gratitude to the Saviour making duty a delight, and the conquest of evil habits inducing the forgiven penitent to frequent the Saviour's society more and more. What is Salvation? It is *God's friendship.* It is that devout and loyal frame of mind where the Most High has resumed His vacated throne in the heart of His creature, and where, receiving the homage of that creature's gratitude and love and cheerful obedience, He sheds the light of a paternal complacency. What is Salvation? It is *a happy immortality.* It is eternal life re-kindled in the soul by its union to the Second Adam, often dimly felt at present, but in its dark strugglings, as well as in its brightest hopes and most ecstatic inspirations, anticipating the time when it shall have left death and all darkness behind it, and shall have no other bound to its horizon save God's immensity, no limit to its duration save God's eternity.

And how is this salvation to become personally sure?—how are you to make it your own in actual possession? The first thing, as we have seen, is to apprehend clearly what God has revealed regarding it, and then do as God directs,—Believe on Jesus. Rest on His atonement as the basis, at once righteous and gracious, of your reconciliation to a sin-avenging Jehovah. Believe on Jesus as the gift of the Father's love, and the exponent of the Father's character. "This is my beloved Son,—hear ye Him," is

the voice of authenticating attesting Deity: so hear you Him. Hear Him when He says, "Deny thyself; take up thy cross and follow Me." Hear Him when He says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." Hear Him when He says, "Take no thought for to-morrow." Hear Him when He takes the memorial cup, and adds, "This do in remembrance of Me." Hear Him in all His sayings, however plain or paradoxical, and follow Him as fast and far in His beautiful career as weak and faltering footsteps can; and thus with no barren nor unfruitful knowledge of the Lord Jesus, but with His own characteristics in you, and abounding, your calling and election will be a subject of little anxiety to yourself and no anxiety to others: for thus an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is to be feared there are many here who are giving little diligence, or none, to make sure of salvation, and to such it should be sufficient to say, At the present rate you cannot, you will not be saved. Very likely you are doing nothing on purpose to destroy and ruin your souls, but for that there is no need. If a man is ill of a mortal malady, if his ship has gone down, and he is afloat on the open sea, there is no need to swallow laudanum or nightshade, death is already at the door. Your good ship, the First Covenant, went down long ago, and unless you are picked up and rescued by the Ark of Atonement, you will never reach the happy shores. Your wisdom is to cry from these depths, "Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If Thou, Lord, shouldst

mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" and never rest till, drawn from the abyss, you can extol the Lord's mercy and His plenteous redemption. Though a dull disease—in ordinary cases without shocking symptoms or much sensational suffering—estrangement from the living God is a deadly malady, and if not cured and counteracted, it will certainly end in the second death. There is no need to break out in open crime, or run to all excess of riot. Ungodliness—the soul's indifference or indisposition towards the Chiefest Good, the Highest Excellence, is itself a fatal distemper, which can have no other conclusion but the loss of all excellence whatever, and exclusion from His presence, to whom the man's whole history has been saying evermore, "Depart from us, Thou living God, depart."

In a case like this apathy is disastrous; inertia, the doing of nothing, is sure to be fatal. Nay, the doing of something will not suffice, unless that thing be what God has directed. The shipwrecked passenger who grasps an oar does something, but if the possession of that oar leads him to reject the hand which would draw him on board, it is worse than useless. If your church-going, if your reputable life, has the effect of saying to the Saviour, "No, thank you; I can float," the publicans and vilest sinners may get to Heaven before you; for they feel that they are sinking, they have nothing to sustain them—nothing to deceive them.

> "A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
> On Thy kind arms I fall."

Rest not till those everlasting arms are around you, and

although the cold brine may still drip from your garments, though your limbs may still be torpid and powerless with that long exposure on the deep, still the moment you clasp that outstretched arm of mercy, you have come in contact with what will never let you go.

> "Other refuge have I none,
> Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

But, oh, brethren, "make sure." Among the importunate urgencies and the glittering illusions around us, we are in danger of being cheated out of our only opportunity; and what helps the illusion is the frequency of the Gospel, and the familiar nearness of the great salvation. Some are like the patient who was nervous till the doctor came, and who could not rest till the medicine was procured; but now thatthat medicine has arrived, he leaves it unopened and untouched on the mantel-shelf,—he sees it, and is consoled; but this false consolation may prevent a cure. You would not like to give up your Testament or go away from a Gospel ministry: but when do you mean to act on the prescription?—when do you mean to become a disciple of the Saviour, distinct, decided, unequivocal? This gazing at the medicine, this shaking of the phial, will never make you well. Or rather, you are like a traveller who has received an injury, and along the track where he is travelling there grows abundantly an herb which could cure him; but at present the hurt is more an inconvenience than any actual suffering; and he grudges the time that would be lost were he halting; he cannot be troubled, and as the roadside is lined with the specific—it is positively as plentiful as any weed—he takes for

granted that he may find and use it any day. Till some morning he wakes up in excruciating agony. "Oh, run and fetch me a bunch of that hyssop, a leaf of that balm. This wound has fired up, and its torture makes me wild." "Oh, then, you don't know where you are. There are no Gospels hereaway. There is no one here to say, Come unto Me, and I will give you rest; no one to say, Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee. But why did you not think of the remedy in time? Till now it skirted your path at every step, and met you at every turn. Yesterday was your accepted time, yesterday was your day for salvation."

SERMON XXIV.

WHEREFORE DO YE DOUBT?

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" —MATT. XIV. 31.

A CHRISTIAN is a believer in Jesus. He is one who is so convinced of the truth of the New Testament as to act on the conviction. He believes that that same Jesus who was born at Bethlehem in the days of Augustus is the Son of God, and the long-promised Saviour of Sinners. He believes that this Jesus did no sin, but fulfilled all righteousness, and that every gracious word He spoke, and every wonderful work He performed, were so many manifestations of that Godhead whose Envoy and Exponent He was. He believes, that instead of being crowned with the world's gratitude, what with the antipathy of vice to virtue, and of prejudice and error to light and truth, what with the resentment of hypocrisy against plain-spoken fidelity, and the rebellion of earthliness against the claims of God out and out asserted, what with the fickleness of the multitude, the ruthlessness of enemies, and the faint-heartedness of friends, this career

of unprecedented goodness ended in taunts and insults, and a death of cruel torture. He believes that this death had a deep and mysterious meaning. He believes that it was not merely a manifestation of man's weakness and wickedness, when the "representative men" of this world, the Pagan and the Jew, the natural religionist and the possessor of revelation, vied with each other in the effort to extinguish Innocence and cut off the Truth-speaker; but he believes that it was still more a manifestation of God. Instead of a horrible anomaly, instead of a slumber or paralysis on the part of the righteous Ruler of the Universe, during which an absolutely innocent Being fell into ruffian hands, and cried, "Save me, if it be possible," but Omnipotence found it impossible, or the sullen heavens did not sympathize,—instead of the monstrous supposition that, selecting as the victim of an experiment the only inhabitant of earth who had done nothing to forfeit His claim on God's goodness, the Most High immolated this angelic martyr to teach the world a lesson of submission and self-sacrifice, the Christian believes that in His martyrdom Jesus was a Mediator as cheerful and unconstrained as He was worthy; taking hold of a guilty race with the one hand, and of a holy God with the other, and over the altar of His cross, and the oblation of His own bleeding body, bringing them into the concord of a new and well-ordered covenant. He believes that Jesus offered Himself for the sins of His people—to the world the gift of God's love, and to God the freely volunteering and Divinely accepted representative of His people, emancipating Divine Mercy

from the restraint of Divine Justice, and in one and the same act fulfilling God's threatenings against transgression whilst letting forth His pent-up compassions towards the infatuated transgressor. He believes that for His matchless generosity the Son of God has been richly recompensed. He believes not only that He rose from the dead, and returned to His own heaven, but that ever since it has been His unutterable joy to know that throughout the universe God is better understood, more adoringly loved, and glorified with a more enraptured homage, whilst ever and anon it is His delight to welcome into His own blessedness another and yet another of His ransomed. He believes that if he only throws his own lost and sinful soul on this Redeemer, there is in His sacrifice sufficient merit to cancel all his guilt, and in His heart sufficient love to undertake the keeping of his soul for all eternity. He believes that Jesus is a Saviour. He believes that His heart is set on His people's holiness, and that it is only by making them new creatures, pure-minded, kind-hearted, unselfish, devout, that He can fit them for a home and a life like His own, that He can fit them for the occupations and enjoyments of heaven. And believing all this, he prays and labours after holiness. His belief is summed up in that apostolic creed, the Confession of Faith of Paul the aged, which, modified to his individual use, would run :—

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to me, teaching me that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, I should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed

hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and my Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for me, that He might redeem me from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar person, zealous of good works."

Such, in substance, is the Christian's faith. I trust there are some here who believe all this, and a great deal more. It is to be feared, however, that there are some who do not believe it at all, and others who hope that they believe, or who would be glad to believe, but who are harassed with doubts and misgivings. It is to the latter that we would say a few words this morning, "Wherefore do you doubt?"

1. Does any one answer, "I have my misgivings as to the very foundations of the faith. When so many systems of religion have come and gone, how do I know that this will not in its turn wax old and vanish away? I wish I could make as sure of the facts in the Gospel narrative as I am of some other histories." And wherefore not? If you are inclined for such investigations, we think we can promise you an amount of satisfaction such as you can attain in regard to few of those events which no sane man for a moment dreams of questioning. But it is hardly needful to go so far. Unless you are rich in leisure, it is hardly needful for you to examine books of historic evidence. It is hardly needful to trace the pedigree of manuscripts and versions, and hunt up the records of antiquity. By all means do it if you can. If after the flood has come and swept other structures away, you are nervous about the house in which you and your fathers have worshipped, by all means dig down till you reach the rock; and if you

find that there is none, if you are satisfied that there was no piacular decease accomplished at Jerusalem, that no ascension to heaven took place at Mount Olivet, that there was no supernatural interposition of God's Spirit at Pentecost, then be satisfied. As an honest and earnest inquirer, having come to this result, go through with your conclusion. Congratulate yourself on that perspicacity which has enabled you to do what the learning of Selden, the intellectual elevation of Bacon, the acuteness of Pascal, the candour of Newton, the fetter-scorning freedom of Milton, could not accomplish, and rejoice that you have ascertained for sure and certain that the story of the Nazarene is a cunning fable. And as you go forth into your sunless world, and up into your blank cold future, as you leave off your useless prayers, and give up your hope for the amelioration of mankind, as, in the prospect of your own decease, you feel a momentary regret that there is no Lord Jesus into whose hands you may commit your spirit, and no particular providence to whose care you may intrust your orphan children, comfort yourself that this is consistency, comfort yourself that in so doing you are the martyr of your own ingenuousness, and paying tribute to the greatest of all causes, the cause of truth.

But if you spurn this irony; if you say, "I don't want to be a deist; I don't want to get doing as I like; but as I feel that there is something wrong with me as I am, I should like to be made different from my present self, so as to do what God desires, and become what God approves; but I have my difficulties, and I confess that one difficulty

is the Book itself, with all its mysterious doctrines and marvellous statements." Then we reply, Your simplest remedy for doubts as to the origin of the Book is just to read the Book itself. Said a deep thinker, "I am sometimes filled with questions of anxious import. Art thou from heaven, O Gospel? Thou hast caused me to hope: art thou a rock? And it replies, 'Dost thou not see in my face the true character of God? and the eternal power incarnate? Dost thou not in Jesus discern the image of the invisible God, which, unlike the first Adam, the second Adam has preserved untarnished? And in looking at it, dost thou not feel thyself gradually change into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord?'" So, haunted and harassed by idle doubts or abstract difficulties, have recourse to the Bible itself; read the Gospel story, and say, "Is there nothing here but a man—a Jew—a poor illiterate peasant brought up in the darkest and coarsest corner of Palestine?" And read, for one quiet thoughtful hour together, the Psalms, the Prophecies, the apostolic Epistles, and say, "Did this religion spring up spontaneous in the soil of the human heart? or is it not more reasonable to believe its account of itself, that it came down from God in heaven?"

2. But wherefore do you doubt? And another answers, "Because it is too good news to be true. The thing that staggers me is just that I am so deeply and personally involved. If the Gospel narrative were an ordinary history, I should deem it crazy work to deny its genuineness; but I cannot view it thus coolly and dispassionately. To me it is not so much a biography as a charter; it is

not so much a book of doctrines as a bundle of title-deeds; and I cannot help inspecting the seals with microscopic jealousy, and trembling where no rational ground for suspicion is." And it is true. The tidings are more wonderful than ordinary language can express; but is not this just what you should expect in a Gospel *come from God?* Grant that it does promise to the penitent clasping Christ's cross an absolution instant and entire—a reinstatement in God's friendship immediate and complete—would a graduated scale of forgiveness, a method which dealt out pardon by remote and reluctant instalments, have been more worthy of that Mercy which longs to be gracious—that munificence which contrived the scheme of Redemption, and which gives its blessings and upbraideth not? Grant that it does promise to the believer in Jesus—that is, to the rebel returning through the door of atonement, not an abatement of his penalty, but its total remission—not a thousand years of life, or ten thousand, to be followed by annihilation, but an immortality; and this not an immortality in a region of chequered good and evil, such as Earth now is, but in a world incomparably better—is not this just what might be expected from a scheme designed to do the highest honour to the merits of Immanuel, and to give the largest outlet to the loving-kindness of Jehovah? But it is in your power to prove it. Not to say that there is no other name given under heaven by which you can be saved, and that therefore you cannot err if you take and plead the Name of Jesus, it is in your power even now to test its efficacy. "Whatsoever you ask in my name," said

Jesus, "the Father will give it you." Ask then the faith, the light, the confirming which you need, and see if it do not come to you. Or, take it another way: Accept the boon which God puts even now within your offer, and see if the promised blessings do not quickly follow; accept the pardon offered freely and forthwith, and see if you have not peace with God—a peace as hallowing as it is unspeakable; and thus step by step proceeding, you will verify the sayings of the Book, till, with an experience ever deepening and expanding, you are forced to the conclusion that there is not a promise there which is not Yea and Amen; and until you deeply feel in all your altered being that He is a living and almighty Agent, who has so new-made your nature, and that He who has so turned your aspiration heavenwards will not work a greater wonder when He actually opens the pearly gates and admits you within the Celestial City.

No; fear not to confront realities. The Saviour lives, and the first joy that you will give to Him is when, leaving off your false excuses, you throw yourself with a full heart and empty hands into His arms of mercy. The Saviour lives, and were you now to die looking for salvation only from that Friend of Sinners, verily this day should you be with Him in a better than Adam's paradise. The Saviour lives, and in full sympathy with that wondrous lover of men's souls, the Holy Spirit is even now ready, if besought, to begin His sanctifying process in your mind. The Saviour lives, and even now He stretches out towards you an arm which, if you only grasp in thankful love, your faith will strengthen while you cling, and it will be

from no weakness in that arm if you are not ere long exalted to a point of holy attainment which at this moment you view with despair, and by and bye to that region of unveiled realities, where you will ask in wonder at yourself, "Wherefore did I doubt?"

3. "But," says a third, "the reason why I doubt is that I have 'little faith.' I seem almost to want the believing faculty. It almost looks as if no sign would convince me, or as if no conviction would move me. Like a shipwrecked man who sees streaming at his side the rope thrown out for his rescue, but who won't touch it, or who takes hold of it so listlessly that it slips through his fingers, I see floating beside me a faithful saying, and I know that if I took hold of it resolutely, it would draw me into the same ship with Jesus; but I don't. I sometimes touch it or take a heartless hold of it, but just to let it go again. No sooner does it appear to move me, than it drops through my bewitched and torpid fingers." Allow me to ask, Do you really wish to get into the same ship with Jesus? I do not ask, Were He coming into your ship would you not be apt to say, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord? for that might be the cry of a tender conscience brought into sudden contact with the Saviour's sanctity; the cry of a conscience sensitive with recent sin, or bowed down by great unworthiness in the presence of infinite Purity. But I ask, Would you really like to be taken into the same ship henceforward, and complete the voyage towards eternity in the society of the holy heart-searching Saviour? Ah! is not your faith little, because a worm is at the root? Are you not in love with the

world, or in league with some besetting sin?—a sin and a sinful world which you know that Christ asks you to surrender? Is not the grace of God and the kindness of the Gospel lost upon you, because that grace would teach you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, godly? and although you understood a good deal about the work of redemption, and do not like to lose sight of it altogether, are you not yourself reluctant to be redeemed?—are you not reluctant to be redeemed from all iniquity, and purified as are God's peculiar people?

In such a case it is easy to see whence your doubts arise. You are really reluctant to be saved. You may fear the wrath to come, but you do not wish to be delivered from those sins which are the fuel of remorse, and which feed the everlasting burnings. What is needed to strengthen your faith is something which will quicken your conscience and deepen your earnestness. More evidence will not do it, more conclusive demonstration will not do it. To try to erect a creed—a firm and personal faith in the Saviour—to try to erect such a structure on the soil of a carnal and unsanctified heart, in the midst of sins with which the sinner is determined not to part, is like driving piles in the Slough of Despond, or trying to find a foundation in a bottomless quag. To get rid of your doubts, part with your sin. Put away what, if not thrown off betimes, will be the everlasting mill-stone round your neck. Put away your intemperance, your dishonesty, your unlawful ways of making money, your sensuality, your falsehood acted or spoken, and see if the best dis-

peller of doubt is not a single eye, an honest and undivided heart; see if your faith does not grow exceedingly from the moment you ingenuously say, Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?

And this suggests, in conclusion, let those who really have a little faith, and who deplore their frequent doubts and fits of unbelief, watch and strive against each besetting sin, and labour after Christlike excellence. In last Sabbath's context we saw that the great maxim for those believers who would make salvation sure, was to make sure of sanctification. Give diligence and add to your faith virtue, temperance, patience, etc., for he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. If you want to watch the lights of heaven by night, or enjoy the sun by day, you will not choose your residence in a damp and vapoury region. You go up among the hills, or you drain away the stagnant waters from around your dwelling. But many Christians are not sufficiently careful where they live. They are content with the world's low level, and they allow old sins to accumulate round them, the evil habits of other days, till the atmosphere grows hazy; they cannot see afar off; the lights of heaven are blotted out, and it is with a faint and frosted beam, or with a reddened and unattractive orb that the Sun of Righteousness shines through, if He is descried at all. Oh, brethren, do not make it cloudy weather. The Sun of Righteousness is shining. There is no exhausting of His orb, and there is healing in His wings. Let not your own low tastes and unholy habits send up those exhalations which will

blot out your own summer, and darken your own homestead; but put away the sins which grieve the Saviour, the sins which cloud your conscience and obscure His face. And see if a holy life be not the best disperser of unwelcome doubts, and new obedience the most certain guide to fresh assurance.

SERMON XXV.

SEEK, AND YE SHALL FIND.

"Seek, and ye shall find."—MATT. VII. 7.

GOD is not only a great *Giver*, but He is sometimes a great *Hider of his gifts*. Like a vessel sent to sea, our world has been launched on its long voyage with its various passengers on board, and as it is to touch at no other port till all these passengers are landed, it would need to be well provisioned; it would need to have the requisite stores within itself, for it cannot signal for supplies to Mars or Jupiter, and even its own tender, the Moon, cannot come alongside, but the light and other help it lends are transmitted from a distance. But like a kind and considerate Owner, the Most High has furnished His great ship with all possible supplies. He has "framed and furnished it as the abode of man," and in the way of material comfort and accommodation there is scarcely a conceivable appliance—food or fuel, medicine, cordials, but what may somewhere be found.

Yet in order to be found it must be sought for. Instead of being placed on the deck, or in positions obtrusively

conspicuous, many of the best and most serviceable commodities are out of sight. They are stowed away in magazines and lockers, and some of them are deep down in the hold ; so that in its great migration from time into eternity the human race has been a hundred ages on its way without discovering all the bounties beneath its feet and before its hand. They must be sought for. The loaf must be sought for in the grains of that yellow grass, the emperor's robe in the vest of that crumpled worm. For the diamond we must wash the mud, and for the pearl dive deep down in the ocean. And the voyage is beguiled, the passengers are kept from tedium and from quarrelling with one another, by the absorbing search ; and from time to time a great sensation is produced, a great contribution is made to the common weal, and a great joy awakened by the discovery of a much-coveted acquisition; and as the long-sought desideratum is dragged from its lurking-place, as the mighty engine which takes on itself the labour of a continent, as the anæsthetic agent which soothes or supersedes the pain of millions, as the swift courier who annihilates space, or the solar light which annihilates darkness, is revealed,—a shout of rapture proclaims the joy, and as they proceed to rear the inventor's monument, men confess that for such a day it was well worth while to wait these thousand years. For man's sake, God hides His gifts. He hides them that industry and ingenuity may be exerted in the search, and so the seeker be improved by his very failures. He hides them too that the very delay may quicken desire, and so augment the delight and the thankfulness of eventual discovery.

But whilst it is precluded from putting into any port, the Great Proprietor is not prevented from visiting the ship and making new arrangements with its company. He can come on board at any point in all the voyage, and of these visits one is more especially memorable, in consequence of a commodity being then added which was not among the original stores, and which, in value and importance, surpasses every other. But even this one is not exempt from the great principle already indicated, although it works in a different way. It is given to all: but in order that any one may appropriate and enjoy it, he must seek and secure it for himself. In one sense it is no secret, but in point of fact it is very generally overlooked, and very little known. In one sense it is public property; but in point of fact it is a very limited possession, and the persons are few who have made it absolutely and unmistakeably their own.

This priceless boon is salvation. On the one hand it will be allowed by every reader of the Bible that a great salvation is provided, and that it is provided not for the fallen of any other world, but for the sinful sons of Adam. It will be allowed that it is no desire of God to withhold the boon from any, and yet it must be confessed that it is actually enjoyed by few. And when we inquire a little further we shall find that notwithstanding the amplitude of the Gospel provision, and the promiscuousness of the Gospel offer, there is a sense in which the Gospel is hid. We shall find that to the natural eye the object least conspicuous is that great Personage whom by an express revelation God has made so prominent.

On the pavement in the thoroughfare lay a little canvas bag. A fine lady passed along, but her mind was absorbed in last evening's rout, and, thinking of its gay dresses and pretty speeches, she noticed nothing, and in proud and erect propriety she floated on. Then followed three young fellows arm-in-arm, fast and merry men they seemed to be; and one of them pushed it with his foot, and another kicked it along the path till it was all over mud and mire. But even in this state a little boy would have snatched it up, had not his nurse pulled him off and scolded him for offering to touch a dirty thing like that: "It will spoil your nice new gloves, and I daresay it has belonged to some beggar boy." So there it lay, getting more and more soiled and sodden as successive heels went over it, till an actual beggar boy appeared. He was in no particular haste, and as his hungry eyes looked this way and that, they alighted on the dirty trampled rag. He turned it over with his shoeless toes, then stooped and picked it up, and finding that there was something in it, he slacked the string, and saw a number of bright little stones that looked like beads. As he was emptying them into his palm, and gazing at them, he felt a hand on his head, and there was a kind and beautiful stranger who clapped him on the shoulder, exclaiming, "Well done! I have been watching at that window all morning, and it has happened as I prophesied. The hungry are filled with good things, whilst the rich are sent empty away. My child, your fortune is made. You have found pearls of great price, and you will henceforth remember, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'"

The Gospel contains unspeakable riches; but, says the Apostle, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." Like the earthen pot, the coarse brown pipkin in which the Corinthians sometimes kept their money, God's own gold, the gift He has sent to make our spirits rich, often comes in an earthen vessel. The sermon which conveys it, the book which explains it, is not entertaining or beautiful. Like the bag of coarse canvas, it is homely and plain, and as there is no excellency of speech to arrest the ear, as there is nothing brilliant to dazzle the eye, the careless pass over it, or push it aside. And many are pre-occupied. They have closed the pew-door on the outer man, and left their poor bodies here in church to wait as best they can till half-past twelve; but meanwhile their minds have started off to take a walk; and could the imagination be caught and kept in the spot where it now is, one would be incarcerated in a money-safe; another would be squeezed flat between the leaves of the last story he was reading; a third would be bottled up in some new invention he is perfecting; a fourth would be arrested on some mountain of vanity or turned into a pillar of salt, looking back on the pleasures of sin. "Seek, and you shall find." Are you seeking? Are you really caring what becomes of your soul? Then the answer to the great question you will not despise, though it comes in texts the most trite, or in words of equivalent import, however plain and unpolished. But others are scoffers. Partly in mischief and partly in malice, they like to have a fling at the Bible; and all sorts of objections and cavils they hurl at it, as if a sarcasm could annihilate the facts of history or

overturn the Rock of Ages. And, worse than the obloquy of actual opposers, the Gospel is compromised by unworthy professors. That Gospel proclaims a full and free pardon, a forgiveness of sins immediate and entire, a present salvation. And some have turned this grace of God into licentiousness. They have clutched at the pardon and rejected the purity. Christ's righteousness they are willing to wear as a fire-proof garment to protect them from the flames of hell—not as a robe of inward renovation as well as outward adornment, admitting the guests of God, congenial souls, to the marriage-supper of his Son. And boasting that they are saved whilst they continue in their sins, they prejudice many minds against that Gospel which they use as a cloak of lawless liberty. And thus, that Gospel which in itself has no form nor comeliness to the carnal eye, they still further foul with their feet and (so to speak) kick into the kennel, prejudicing against it not merely the polite and fastidious, but the correct and the conscientious—those who rightly assume that nothing can be divine which is not holy, and that none can go to heaven who are not in some measure fitted for it.

But, my dear friends, I would rather leave off this fault-finding style of remark, and address a few words of friendly suggestion to those who are really concerned for their souls, and who are seeking after salvation, if haply they may find it.

And in the very outset this assurance should be very encouraging,—"Seek, and ye shall find." The subject to which it applies pre-eminently, as the context shows, is this very matter of the soul's welfare, and the things that

accompany Salvation. The promise is not "Seek health, and ye shall find it. Seek fame, seek fortune, and ye shall find them." But the whole discourse bears on the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof; and the promise of the Faithful and True Witness is tantamount to this: "Seek God, and ye shall find Him. Seek His friendship, and He will not refuse it. Seek the Holy Spirit, and He will not withhold it." The fame, the wealth, the bodily vigour *look* like good things; and if they are really good for you, your heavenly Father will give them when you ask. But the stone that looks likest to a loaf will only fill your mouth with gravel; the serpent that looks likest to a fish will only fasten in you its poison-fangs: so you need not cry when a good-looking thing is steadfastly kept back. But those things which your heavenly Father has pronounced good, and as such put His own mark upon them, you cannot covet too earnestly, or ask too confidently, or seek with too great certainty of finding. Seek pardon, seek peace with God, seek acceptance in the Saviour, and most assuredly you shall find them.

But for the sake of greater precision, I would say, *Seek knowledge.* To true religion a prerequisite is a certain measure of enlightenment; and "if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." But although all revealed truth is important, the truth to you primary and of most immediate and pressing concernment is the truth

regarding a sinner's reconciliation to God, and re-instatement in the Divine favour. In the plan of human redemption God is Himself the Lawgiver and Judge,—He is Himself the Priest,—He is Himself the Sacrifice.[1] In the way of satisfaction for sin everything is "finished," and nothing now remains but that, complying with the Gospel call, the sinner should come in from the highways and hedges, and sit down to the banquet so munificently provided, and so freely thrown open. All things are ready, and if you only know what mercy there is with God, and what plenteous redemption, you will hardly be able to hold back or hesitate.

More especially, as comprehending the best knowledge, and as the most effectual means at once of re-assurance Godward and of all progress in goodness, *seek the Saviour.* Seek not only to know about Him, but seek confidence in Him; seek to know Him as your own. When, conscious of some trespass, a Hebrew took his offering to the altar, the priest could not refuse to present it. That priest was a public functionary, "ordained for men in things pertaining to God," and on very purpose to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. Nor was it a reason for declining to interpose that the man was poor, or unacquainted with the ritual, or that he was a great transgressor. No, Aaron! no, Eliezer! it is your very office to "offer for sins," and far from spurning this suppliant so badly instructed, and so laden with iniquity, it is your duty and your prerogative to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." The worse he is

[1] Wessel, ap. *Bibl. Sacra*, xvi. p. 723.

and the more ignorant, the greater is his need of you. So our great High Priest claims it for Himself that He is a Personage still more public and clothed with an office still more extensive than Aaron. He knows not any kind of guilt for which an expiation was not rendered exhaustive and complete when once for all He offered up Himself, and there is no sinner of Adam's family whom He does not deem entitled to plead the power of that atonement, and whom He does not make welcome to all the services which His mediatorial enthronement can render and His irresistible intercession can procure.

So you, conscious sinner, come boldly to the throne of grace; come and you will obtain mercy now, and will find help in all your future times of need. Jesus the Son of God, passed into the heavens, is a great High Priest; and in virtue of His exalted function He puts His best services at the disposal of any one who claims them amongst all His human brethren. And although in that vast family, amongst the many sinful He stands forth the Only Sinless, this inspires no disdain nor arrogance; this does not lead Him to draw aloof and stand alone. He has compassion on the ignorant; He is touched with our infirmities, and of our temptations He knows everything except the sin. So fear not to go to Him. Speaking reverently, He holds His office for the behoof of every sinner, and His name, His advocacy, His sympathy were not more at the command of Paul or Stephen than they are available to you. In His blood there is virtue sufficient to blot out all your trespasses; in His obedience merit enough to cover all your deficiencies; in His censer incense enough to per-

fume all your prayers and hallow all your services. So fall at His feet confessing your sins, and there alone of all places in the universe you may rely on obtaining absolution. He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and His gracious "Go in peace" will be accompanied by the Spirit's seal and the Father's approving Amen.

Seek the Saviour, and you shall find Him. His official character and His gracious disposition are preserved to us in the Gospel story. His actual presence is not far from any one of you. Repair to Him at once, remembering that He has not yet come down from His throne of grace, and that no change has yet come over His heart of tenderness. Repair to Him at once, reminding yourself and (if you choose) reminding Him of His generous assurance, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And as His own goodness compels you to come in, as from this world's highways where you have long wandered, seeking rest and only grown more weary, as from the hungry hedges where the sparrows and the frost contend with you for the last poor berries, as from the highways and hedges you seek the palace-door, and almost falter at the threshold, when snowy pillars and golden galleries open on your view, and your eye falls back on your torn and draggled raiment, fear not to go forward, for in that vestibule robes appropriate are proffered to every comer:—

> "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
> My beauty are, and spotless dress."

And as thus arrayed you go in to that High Festival

which the Father gives in honour of His Son, with your new name and your new position will come a new nature, a new nobility. Loving Him who hath first loved you, you will have no desire to go back to the highways and hedges; but, a fellow-citizen with the saints, and a member of God's household, with your palatial life will begin to grow a princely spirit; and "seeking the things above," you will come back upon the world with the elevation of a higher citizenship, and with the attractiveness of one whom Christ is Himself attracting.

Seek certainty. Give all diligence so as to attain a full assurance, the assurance of sin forgiven, and of your own acceptance in the Saviour. And if still in any doubt, most likely the misgiving comes from some evil habit still harboured, or from Gospel truth imperfectly apprehended, or from the Christian life not being clearly and definitively commenced. The soul's great enemy is sin, and Christ hath been raised up, "that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him *without fear*, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life." If this old enemy haunt you, if he has still a stronghold in your soul, and if in pitched battles you are from time to time falling before your besetting sin, you will not serve God without fear. Dark shadows of apostasy will flit across your path, and your energies will be paralysed by dreary forebodings. So cry to the Captain of Salvation to deliver you out of the hand of this enemy, and, as for life, as for Heaven, watch against his furious onsets or sudden surprises. But even should you feel that there is no sin which sunders from the

Saviour, or divides with Him your heart's dominion, there may be still such consciousness of evil as makes you anxious and unhappy. You have often prayed for pardon, and you have sometimes ventured to hope that your many sins were forgiven, but memory, too faithful, is ever and anon bringing them to mind; and whilst your own soul has them in such poignant recollection, you fear they can hardly be forgotten by God. But, to use the words of William Bridge, the great Puritan preacher at Yarmouth, "Suppose a man do owe a merchant three or four hundred pounds for goods or commodities received at various times, a friend comes and pays the debt, and the book is crossed, and hearing of this the debtor is greatly comforted. But by and bye he comes to the place himself, and opening the book, and not being accustomed to such matters, he still can read every item, and he stands aghast: 'I had hoped that debt was paid, but here are all the particulars still quite legible, and I doubt I am quite undone.' So the sinner, when first he went to Jesus, hoped that his debts were paid and his sins forgiven. But how is this? In this hour of dejection he looks into the Book of Conscience, and the items all are there. Yes, but, says the Comforter, in the Book of Remembrance, of which thy conscience is the copy, they are crossed out. If legible, they are none the less discharged. Christ hath satisfied for them, and crossed them out. Let me apply His precious blood and cross them out of thy conscience also."[1] And if you have any doubt as to the reality of your religion, solve the doubt by becoming definite and

[1] Bridge's Works (1649), vol. i. 14, altered.

decisive now. You know what is the better part; then choose it. You know who is the rightful claimant of your services; therefore take up the Cross, deny yourself, and follow Christ. There is great misery in a divided heart; there is something very unsatisfactory and contemptible in a divided history; and if you are henceforth to give the whole to one, you cannot hesitate which that one shall be. Has any one a claim to you like the Friend who died on Calvary? Can any one do for you what He offers to perform who has all power in heaven and on earth? Will any one stand by you so long as He who has promised to be with His people to the end, and who at the end takes His people to be with Him? Consider your own capabilities and your necessities. Consider your need of pardon, your need of holiness, your need of a powerful Protector and a prevailing Mediator, and say if any other will suffice than He whom God hath exalted a Prince and a Saviour; and consider your solemn distinction, that awful and inalienable heritage of ever-during existence,—your susceptibility of pain and pleasure, of happiness or woe. Consider the powers that God has given, a mind fit to commune with the highest sons of reason,—affections capable of loving God Himself—faculties which if emancipated from the bondage of corruption might fill a whole eternity with glorious deeds, and say, "Which shall it be? Self or the Saviour? Christ or Belial? The joys of time and sense, or the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore?"

You cannot hesitate. Your mind is satisfied; your judgment is clear. Let your understanding bring round

your heart, and, made willing in the day of power, give yourself to God in Jesus Christ.

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

Now rest, my long-divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful centre, rest;
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels' bread to feast!

High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall often hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

DODDRIDGE.

SERMON XXVI.

IMMORTALITY.

"Our Saviour Jesus Christ . . . hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."—2 Tim. i. 10.

Of all the scenes in human history few are more affecting than the death of Socrates. On the whole, we are inclined to think that of those who have not enjoyed the Bible and its benefits, there has been no one altogether equal to the Athenian sage, so genuine, so perspicacious, so virtuous, so intent on truth, so transparent to those around him. He was doomed to die. Some twelve or fourteen friends spent with him the last day of his earthly existence, and at his own request they spent it discoursing on Immortality. The conversation has been preserved. There is something very affecting in its candour and at the same time its inconclusiveness. He sums up all in saying, "That this, or something like this, is the destiny of our souls, appears to me a reasonable belief, a belief on which one may fairly rest his hopes. The risk is overbalanced by the gain, and it is well to find a charm for one's fears; and on this ac-

count it is that I thus prolong my tale." And then on the strength of the pleasing "peradventure," he drank the poison, and there passed away "of all the men whom we have known," says Plato, "the best, the wisest, the most just."

Four centuries later there was another death-scene, of which we owe the record to a pen as vivid and affectionate as Plato's own. The Son of Mary had come to die. There were circumstances of agitation and anxiety surrounding that upper chamber which made it very unlike the tranquil seclusion of the Athenian prison; but in many respects the scene was similar. For their intolerable truthfulness, — "To bear witness to the truth came I into the world," said Jesus,—"Think little about Socrates, but think a great deal about truth," was the entreaty of the son of Sophroniscus,—for the awful unreserve with which they spoke the truth, each was and felt to be a reproach to his coevals, and was voted out of existence by his countrymen, and each on a false pretext. A few hours before His death, Jesus found Himself surrounded by eleven ardent friends, and whilst they had still a little uninvaded leisure, He began to converse with them. The theme, too, with which He started was Immortality. But He did not reason about it. He knew it; He had it; He had come from the midst of it, and was going back to it again. It was not His disciples whom He asked to comfort Him; it was He who went on to comfort them. "Let not *your* hearts be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." And not only did He speak with home-like desire of the place to which He was going,—" If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto my Father,"—but to them He bequeathed the delightful assurance that if they continued attached to Himself the same home would receive their ransomed spirits : " I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." And He ended it all with the prayer, " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me ; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

As a foil to the Gospel of John, we should be very thankful for that most beautiful of Pagan productions, the *Phædo,* the record of a closing scene, where, in the absence of Revelation, Reason did its utmost. And if we can hardly help shedding tears for the interesting but hesitating sage, oh how thankful we should be to that Saviour who has superseded the need of similar discussions, and who has brought life and immortality to light through His Gospel! The light which the Gospel has shed upon this subject is so affluent that in a single discourse we should vainly attempt to collect it all. Suffice it to say,—

1. Christ hath revealed the fact. Not that it was utterly unknown before. The Psalms contain it, and other passages of the Old Testament; and partly the outgrowth of instincts deep buried in the hearts of men, and partly the result of early and ill-remembered revelations,

—even those who had not the Bible for the most part expected a life beyond the grave. But Christ and the Christian Revelation have made an end of the matter. "The hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." "God will render to every man according to his deeds;—to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." To such sayings there is nothing equivalent elsewhere,—so clear, so authoritative, so conclusive and self-commending, leaving the great Hereafter with its eventful alternatives so conspicuous that it is only wilful blindness which can fail to see, and guilty carelessness which can utterly forget.

And as earnests or illustrations of the life beyond the grave, once and again the Lord Jesus brought back to the vacated tenement the spirit which had lately fled,—Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son at Nain. And lastly, and to crown all, He passed through the grave Himself. He laid down His life, and continued under the power of Death for a time; but again He took up that life which He had so freely laid down, and now that He is "risen and become the first-fruits of them that sleep," we have in Him a specimen of the Resurrection, and a guarantee of His people's immortality.

2. The Gospel hath shed all the light we have on the

nature of the life beyond, the mode or manner of immortality. On some points it says little or nothing, but all that we do know is announced, or by fair induction inferred, from the Gospels, from the Book of Revelation, from the epistles to Thessalonica and Corinth. Without dwelling on these passages, it may suffice for the present to say that they reveal two stages in that ulterior history. There is first the period when absent from the body, the soul is present with the Lord—pure mind—mind seemingly divested of all materialism, a spirit made perfect. A spirit made perfect! How blessed! how glorious! A spirit, all mind!—without the shattered nerves, the leaden feet, the dull brain insisting on slumber, the pampered flesh tempting to sin. And this spirit "made *perfect*,"—the judgment able to distinguish the things that differ, the memory retaining nothing which it would be better to forget, the affections going forth with proportionate ardour to appropriate objects, and now loving the Lord with all their strength, and their neighbour as themselves. What an improvement on the present! what a joyful enlargement from the confusion and coldness of this Meshech, from its torpor and darkness, its continual backslidings and failures, its renewed repentings, returnings, and fallings again! And yet the spirit made perfect is not the "just *man* made perfect;" for with all its immense advance on what it was before, that spirit has still a look forward and a pleasant longing; it awaits the adoption—that redemption of the body which shall complete its likeness to the Son of God. Not only is the immortal soul of Jesus re-united to His Godhead, but as the Second

Adam—the Life and Leader of redeemed humanity—He has reclaimed in power and perfect beauty that body which was laid, marred and wounded, in Joseph's sepulchre. For high purposes has He reclaimed it, not only that when He comes to judgment every eye may see Him, but in order that, as the Head and High-priest of that race which God appointed the minister and interpreter of the material universe,[1] the vision of more than Paradisiac loveliness may unfold to eyes like those which opened on the earlier Eden, and that the voice of adoration may come back from tongues ten thousand times ten thousand. To be made like that glorious body is the hope of the ransomed spirit; and when at the resurrection of the just this hope is realized, enshrined in organs bright and agile, through senses pure and exquisite imbibing and inhaling unconjectured joy from the material universe—those who are like Jesus, and who see Him as He is, shall inherit that world from which the former things are passed away.

3. The Gospel has not only brought immortality to light, but has revealed the means of reaching it. Christ might have come from the Father's house, and gone back to it, and yet might have been the only one from this world who did so; for He is the only one who ever has been here who had the intrinsic right and power to go thither. But to His friends He has extended His own right, and their immortality He has identified with His own. "I am the way. No man cometh to the Father but by Me." He has not tantalized us by bringing within sight

[1] "Homo Naturæ minister et interpres."—Bacon.

of our gloomy sin-girdled realms a region of joy and blessedness, and then saying, "Leap to it: fly to it: throw across your own gangway and step over," but He says, "I am the Way," and the soul which confides itself to His keeping, as on eagle wings and encircled by everlasting arms, will be safely transported to that land of uprightness: nay, the soul which, with ardent affiance, clings close to that mighty Redeemer, will be so far made one spirit with Him, as to possess an earnest of the glory hereafter to be revealed. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," and if you know the Lord Jesus rightly, if through Him, the Way, you have come to a reconciled God, and if through Him, the Truth, God's quickening Spirit has come into your soul, you will possess "life" so plenteously as not to dread the second death: you will be able to look calmly at the grave, and all intervening incidents, strong in the strength of conscious immortality.

The Gospel is the hope that is full of immortality, and if full of the Gospel we should be full of this glorious hope; so full that to us death would be practically abolished. We should be able, with unblanching cheek, to confront those facts which would otherwise be too hard, too awful, for us.

Life is surrounded by death. To the worldling this truth is simply dismal, viewed by itself, to any mind it is sufficiently distressing, that here we are, a whole generation of us, cooped in on every side by that sable horizon, with small choice whether to travel east or west, for in each direction the same dark cloud awaits us, the same black sea, the same inexorable, all-enclasping barrier.

That dear little child—he has got out of the cradle, he has started off on all-fours, he has at last risen to his feet, and with a fistful of decapitated daisies, crowing and exulting, he totters forth the first stage of the eventful journey. And how we love to watch him! and how fond affection pictures "from strength still onward unto strength"—the manly boy, the youthful hero, the virtuous citizen, the warm-hearted and serviceable Christian. And how indignant we are at the croaking anchoret who strikes in, "Yes, it is a pretty pilgrimage on which you have started, you merry little angel. There—it may be next year, or next century—when the moment comes it will be quite the same—there is the pleasant palace whose doors stand open for you, there is the soft, warm couch on which at last you will stretch your life-weary limbs. No, it's no use to turn aside, and try some other path. Go where'er you may, this grave is the inevitable goal.

> 'There where the fathers lie
> Must all the children dwell,
> Nor other heritage possess
> Than such a narrow cell.'"

And there is in this just so much truth, that it is only the believer in Jesus who can say, "Down, soothless insulter! This may be your philosophy, but it is not my faith. The promise is to us and to our children, and in that first start into existence I see the commencement of an immortal history. With two worlds to choose between, I have bespoken for him the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof; and though anxiously, yet hopefully, I watch this feeble outset, which is to terminate, not in a

grave, you mocker! but in a kingdom and a crown. My God and Saviour has gone before, and they are His outspread arms which allure the gleesome childhood on, and, although dark days and sinful should intervene, I never shall renounce my trust in God's great fatherhood, nor my faith in that well-ordered covenant. I see the black barrier, but I see it sunder whenever a ransomed spirit strikes it; I see the grave, but the river is not ended when it goes into the chasm, and in faith I follow, till on the further side it flashes into light once more, and makes glad the city of our God."

All life is surrounded by a great circumference of death, but to the believer in Jesus, beyond this surrounding death is a boundless sphere of life. He has only to die once in order to be done with death for ever. In prospect the preludes and accessories are not agreeable—the pain, the weakness, the manifold infirmities, the helplessness; but the worst will never disturb him. It won't hurt him to be put into the coffin, and by the time that coffin is lowered into the funeral-vault, he would fain say to those who bend over it in tears, Weep not for me!

It is a great thing to be death-defiant. You attend the funeral of a friend, and some hale comrade says, "Poor fellow!"—speaks as if he were himself invulnerable, and, so long as he stands on these columnar limbs erect and stalwart, he feels as if he were infinitely remote from the mischance or mismanagement which has laid his companion there. With bones full of marrow, you are (so to speak) a sturdy animal, and with a proud compassion you regard that frail old man, that wan and wasted youth,

whose turn is likely to be next. And yet they have the advantage over you. That consumptive youth is saying, "Oh, the glorious time is coming; I long to serve God perfectly; I long to be in heaven, praising and glorifying God. My heart goes out to the churchyard, it seems such a desirable place; but oh to glorify God!"[1] That old man is saying, "The time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day." Can you enter into that? Is yours the heroism of the believer strong in abundant immortality? or is it the mere hardihood of the sturdy animal, which, at the first glimpse of the king of terrors, will be sure to flee away?

But even believers seldom do sufficient justice to their faith—none sufficient honour to the Saviour. "Even in our true systems," says a subtle thinker, "we only collect words—counters and medals—as the avaricious accumulate cabinets of coins; and it is not until long after that we exchange the words for sentiments, our coins for enjoyments. A man may believe in the immortality of the soul for twenty years, but only in the twenty-first, in some great moment, is he astonished at the rich substance of this belief—the warmth of this naphtha-spring."[2] And so those lively hopes which you owe to the Lord Jesus, you also owe it to Him to live upon them. If the quaint schoolmaster took off his hat to his scholars, because they were to be the great men of the future, and were to be above ground when he himself was under it,

[1] Brainerd. [2] Richter.

you may well venerate the heir of immortality; and if you yourself are one, you may well be a wonder to yourself. You shall never die. You need not mind how abruptly the drama breaks off, for you shall live to learn the upshot of every revolution, the fate of every empire, the meaning of every mystery. You need not mind how dependent, how abject is your present lot, for you are yet to be a king: rich in the wealth of a Father who is Possessor of heaven and earth, and a fit associate for the highest among the sons of reason. And if you must mind your sins and sorrows, be of good courage, for you shall yet survive them both. You shall yet know the luxury of a mind in perfect harmony with God, and, with the days of mourning ended, the contrast will but enhance the blessedness, where the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick," and where sorrow and sighing are for ever fled away.

Need I say then how transcendently important it is in faith and affection to cleave to the Son of God? If to ourselves we desire that "death" should be "abolished," Jesus Christ must be "*our* Saviour." If we would have the hope full of immortality, with the apostle we must be able to say, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Till joined to the Lord Jesus, there is a death within us which constantly contradicts the hope of immortality. It is a death as old as the expulsion from Eden—a death which dates back as far as the day when man's soul, sinning, surely died—when, like a dead thing, it dropped away from God—like

a dead thing lost all power of holy performance; but he that is joined to the Lord Jesus is made one spirit with Him. To that soul a new life is imparted by God's own Spirit, and for those pure tastes and devout affections now awakened, a sphere is needful, wide as man's wondrous faculties and clear of all obstruction, as is the better country; and he who is thus "saved and called with a holy calling," has from time to time enough of Heaven in himself to create a humble but well-founded hope of Heaven hereafter. Seek then such union to the Son of God, as, leaving no present death within, shall make the second death impossible, and shall leave in all your future only that shadow of death which men call dissolution, and which the Gospel calls sleeping in Jesus; for Jesus hath abolished death, and none find it truer than the expiring saint: "He that believeth in Jesus shall never die."

SERMON XXVII.

"REST IN THE LORD."

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."—PSALM XXXVII. 7.

"WHAT is your notion of heaven? What do you think will be the great element in its happiness?" was asked of Mr. Wilberforce, and he answered, "Love." "And yours?" it was asked of Robert Hall, and he answered, "Rest." The bright-hearted philanthropist looked forward to a fulness of love as the very fulness of joy. The weary sufferer, fatigued and all but frenzied by years of torture, was thankful for the assurance, "There remaineth a *rest* for the people of God;" and as he took the composing-draught and said, "My bed shall ease my complaint," and then in an hour or two was roused to wrestle with his anguish till the dawning of the day, and as such jaded days and nights of terror followed one another through the slowly-creeping years, he could appreciate the verse,

> "There shall I bathe my weary soul
> In seas of heavenly rest,
> And not a wave of trouble roll
> Across my peaceful breast."

But it is long to wait till that evening. If no rest could

be hoped for till we lie down in the grave, or get into that serene and peaceful sanctuary which lies beyond the sepulchre, those of you who feel anyhow weary might well be disheartened, and your spirits might faint because of the way. But something of this comfort may be tasted even now; for in as far as heaven consists in a certain state of mind, something of heaven may be experienced here below. "Those that believe do enter into *rest*"—those that believe in Jesus and in God; and even though the limbs be tired and the eyes be sleepy, if in the arms of the Father of Spirits your own particular spirit has found its quiet rest, all the days of your appointed time you will be able to wait patiently, nay cheerfully.

1. In God the understanding finds rest. A dismal fate would be that which some poets have pictured—a perpetual fall through infinite space. Here is the Lucifer or other lapsed angel hurled over the battlements of heaven; and here, head-foremost, he keeps spinning ever downwards, downwards, day and night, through a black abyss, with no star to relieve the gloom, with no prospect of a landing—downwards, ever downwards. You have gone to sleep, and now come forth to your labour; but he only goes on with his ever-remoter fall:—he himself is surprised into a moment of comatose slumber, and awakes to find himself still fathoming the fearful descent, prone and precipitate. And something like this is the fate of the atheist and pantheist. In taking leave of the truth which he learned at his mother's knee, in launching out on the fields of mere materialism, in ceasing to say, "Our Father who art in heaven," he has leaped over

the wall of Paradise, and as there is no *terra firma* on the farther side, as beyond that wall there is not the smallest ledge or foothold, there is nothing for him but the dreadful descent, first through the lingering twilight of the lost belief, and then from twilight into night—night cold and starless, the very blackness of darkness, a darkness that may be felt. Therefore, happy they who have never left that Paradise, or whose mad soul-suicide has been arrested by God's own arm of mercy. Happy you who, yielding to the threefold testimony—Reason, Revelation, and the remains of God's own Record in the heart—do believe in God, a God personal, almighty, all-wise, all-holy, and who cry "Abba, Father—my Father who art in heaven."

In this persuasion there is a profound repose; and the loss of it I can liken to nothing better than a perpetual life-long descent through an infinite abyss—a precipitation which, if the senses were not drugged for a time, would be the most horrible of all sensations; a leap which leaves the mind without God and without hope, and which in its ever-lengthening descent might hail as friendly that rock of annihilation which would arrest its flight by dashing consciousness into destruction.

Those who believe in God—and probably that includes all here present—are to be congratulated. It may seem no great distinction, it may appear to you a faith sufficiently common, but it is not the less a great blessing. It is a great blessing to be rooted and grounded in the first and fundamental truth of all religion; and you should not only acquiesce in it, but rest in it and rejoice. To you the Lord liveth, and on this rock let your under-

standing repose, whilst your spirit goes forth to expatiate and grow strong. The Lord reigneth, and you are glad. The Lord liveth, and man's spirit is no orphan, nor is the universe itself an outcast; but the world has a Maker, the system has a centre, the mighty maze is not without a plan; and if you have got a mind at all, that mind must have come from the great Father Mind, and in all the changes of its history can never be beneath the notice of that Divine Mind from which it derives its origin.

2. Rest in the Lord. Let your intellect, your judgment, your reason, rest in God; in God personal, and possessed of every perfection—almighty and all-knowing, kind, righteous, and holy; that is, in a God truly Divine. And now we add, Rest in the Lord merciful and gracious. Rest in the Lord as He reveals Himself in the Gospel, propitious to the penitent, ready to receive all who accept His overtures of reconciliation, ready to pardon and to protect from the consequences of their own misdeeds all who in the name of the Saviour come to Him.

Faith in God as God is good, but faith in Him as *our own* God is better. To confess the truth, the one faith will be poor comfort without the other. It may be the solid land, and yet there may be uneasy anxious steps that tread it. You have a powerful enemy, and if on the open plain you meet him in a hand-to-hand encounter, your fate is sealed. But here is a mighty fortress, at once stronghold and sanctuary, which opens its friendly door and takes you in; and from the moment that you enter all its strength and all its old renown are pledged for your security. Your pursuer may be powerful, and it

may be no small fault of yours that has provoked him; but for cases such as yours this consecrated castle has been provided by the King, and in the hour you enter it He stands engaged Himself to satisfy all claims against you, and before you are given up to the enemy and avenger this munition of rocks must be pounded in pieces.

The name of the Lord is that strong tower; run into it and be safe. That name is, "The Lord God merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." That name is Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord Himself our righteousness. That name, according as on the approach of Advent He was named by a heavenly messenger, is "Jesus, because He saves His people from their sins." Into this strong tower, of which the Gospel is the open door—into this revelation of God as receiving all who come to Him, do you enter, and thus throw betwixt yourself and the consequences of your sins that bulwark of strong salvation, the mercy of a pardoning God, the might and faithfulness of an omnipotent Redeemer.

And you that have run in, rest there. Rejoice in Christ Jesus, for in Him you are complete. His righteousness is over you, His strong arm is round you; and he who puts his soul in Christ's keeping shall never perish nor come into condemnation. This is a safe place to rest in. Be thankful to Him who provides it, and as you have availed yourself of His gracious provision, complete your own happiness and reciprocate His kind intention by singing the song you ought to sing,—"We have a strong city; salvation doth God appoint for walls and bulwarks." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

There is such a thing as carnal confidence, and there are lazy loungers who like those prophets best who sew the softest pillows, but we have little fear that what we are now saying will be thus perverted or abused. Those in whom God rejoices are those who rejoice in Him, and none can truly joy in God except those who have received the atonement; and one of Satan's stratagems for keeping souls from God is to put forward the accessories. He makes very prominent the things which accompany salvation, and throws into the background the great salvation itself; and so the Divine compassion, God's matchless love in redemption, gets pushed back and concealed behind an immense mechanical apparatus, and although all that apparatus is Scriptural—faith and repentance and the work of the Spirit in convincing of sin—it is making a wrong use of it to rear it up as a screen or partition betwixt the prodigal and the arms of His Father—betwixt the sinner and the countenance which waits to be gracious. And it is also making a wrong use of these things which accompany salvation, to magnify any one of them into a lesser Saviour, and ask the man who is resting on Christ Jesus, "Yes, but were you first awakened? Before you had a sight of Christ, had you first a sight of yourself? Do you know anything of conviction?—anything of a law-work?—anything of the crucifixion of sin? Did you take Sinai on your way to Calvary?" What is this but making of these mental processes a sort of minor mediators, who must lend us a hand in order that we may be duly conducted to the One Mediator? What is it but making of them so many warders or gatekeepers, who

must all be fed and satisfied before we enter in at the Gospel's open door and appropriate those provisions which God offers to him that hath no money, and which the man whose mental state is bad must first partake before that state grows better?

No, my friends, God's mercy is an open door, swinging freely on such faithful sayings as "Christ came into the world to save sinners,"—"Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" and if by any such faithful saying you have got into the peace of God, it is your wisdom to perplex yourself no further, but rest in the Lord, and render thanks at the remembrance of His mercy.

"There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,"—to them, that is, who unfeignedly acquiesce in God's way of saving sinners through the Son of His love; and if, finding this open refuge, any of you have gone in, and keep in, there is no condemnation to you; and the question is not, How did you get in? or, By what route did you come? but, Are you where God would have you to be? The ship has for several days been taking in its passengers, and many have come deliberately and with a certain look of leisure; and as they have been shown over the various compartments they admire its build and strength, and spacious accommodations, and praise the Benefactor who has provided this free passage to the Land of Promise. But now that she is ready to put to sea, just as they are about to loose the painter, a furious runner is descried, and, dashing through the idle onlookers, from the wharf he leaps straight down upon the deck, never so much as looking to see if there is a gangway—

dashes down so that it is a wonder if his bones are not broken, and, as he lies sobbing and laughing wildly, hugging and kissing the very plank he lies on, you see what a great fright he has gotten, and you are thankful that he still was in time; but the difference betwixt his experience and your own is no reason why you should doubt your right to be on board, or why you should fear that after all you will fall short of the haven. Your *experience* is different, but the ship is the same, and it is able to carry you both. Here is the sanctuary, and you are taking your quiet morning walk, when you lift up your eyes and read, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord!" and, entering in, you like its look so well, you say, "This is my rest; here shall I abide; for this is none other than the house of God: this is the gate of heaven." And you have not long been there till at the postern-door there is a thundering knock and a tremendous outcry, and, as they speed to open, one remarks, "It suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;" but because this scared and startled fugitive comes in hot haste, and panic-stricken, fleeing from the wrath to come, whereas you were attracted by the beauty of holiness, by the grace of God, by the gentleness and loveliness of Jesus, this is no reason why you should quit that only covert where there is room enough for both, or go out in search of needless terrors. No, my dear friends, the blessed God (so to speak) desires to make us at home and happy in Himself, and for this end Christ hath set before us an open door into the Father's house; and it is our duty, our wisdom, and our privilege, not to keep back, but come on

and come in; for there is room, and in any room of that house of many mansions we shall find relief from guilt's haunting, and rest to our souls.

3. Rest to the understanding and rest to the conscience are to be found in the God of the Gospel; and now I add, Rest to the Affections. In God's perfections, in His assurances and promises, there is enough to content the most longing soul, and to fill with a joy unspeakable and full of glorying.

"I am God all-sufficient" (as He said to Abraham)—sufficient for Himself and for all others. Like His emblem the sun, He has a fulness of light in Himself. Were a thousand million more creatures to crowd the earth, that sun has light and heat for them all;[1] and in God there is a fulness of good infinitely greater than the whole creation or the most capacious of His creatures can require. He is a sun and shield; He will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

These truths are familiar, but they are never out of season; and to make them more useful, we would apply them.

1. To those who find the creature insufficient. You are quite right. The creature is not sufficient. "There is in us a degree of desire beyond what the creature can gratify;" and although God can improve the creature, and so make it more satisfying, although He can sanctify our mercies and brighten with His own beauty our friends and relations, He does not intend that they should ever

[1] Rich. Watson's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 451.

be substitutes for Himself. He does not design that we should find in them that fulness and perfection of which He Himself is the source and the summit. Be very thankful if in books and friends and favourite pursuits you can find any enjoyment hallowed and God-derived; but if they sometimes fall short, be not dismayed or embittered. Rather learn on any such occasion to say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

2. You that are care-burdened, learn to rest in the Lord. "I would have you without carefulness," says the Apostle, "casting all your care on him, for he careth for you." What is the bulkiest care, the largest-sized sorrow that a man can carry? We cannot tell, but we are pretty nearly at one on each of these points. Every man thinks that his own is well-nigh the biggest, and he also allows that, first and last, mankind have carried a hundred times more grief than there was any need of. Bulstrode Whytlock was bound for Sweden with most important despatches to its Government from our own. He had reached Harwich, and in order to prevent war and no end of mischief it was most desirable that he should be able to sail on the morrow. But that night, oh, how the wind did whistle, and how outside the harbour the ocean kept rushing and booming! and the anxious ambassador lay measuring as well as he could with his ear the strength of each blast. After midnight his secretary came in and found his chief wakeful and

excited, and learning the reason, he asked, "But, sir, did not the Almighty govern the world before you were born?" "Yes." "And won't He govern it after you are gone?" "Yes." "And if His winds and waves should keep you a prisoner here all this month, will not He go on and govern the world even although Mr. Whytlock is confined to Harwich?" This thought gave rest first to the mind and then to the body of the agitated envoy. He fell asleep, and awoke to find that the day would suit delightfully for the intended voyage.

Poor little fellow, he was carrying in his walk home a big bright-coloured stone of no earthly value, a water-worn brick, you believe, but to a collector just turned two it is precious as jasper. However, it is making him excessively tired, and you advise him to fling it over the hedge; but he won't do that: and even now when you take him on your shoulder, or put him in the perambulator, he won't part with the brick. Carried himself, he still insists on carrying it; and it is only when he falls sound asleep that you quietly take it from his arms and pop it in your pocket, and when he awakes next morning and gets out of bed, there it is, all right and waiting for him.

That's our way. We get into the boat or carriage, and says Paul or Peter, or some other fellow-traveller, "Put down your parcel; let me help you off with your knapsack." "No, thank you; I like to carry it;" and there like fools we pace the deck with the pack on our back, or in order to make room for it sit forward on the narrow and uneasy ledge, as if no express provision had been made for the accommodation of such luggage. That's our

way. We are weary and heavy-laden, and our heavenly Father offers to carry us and our affairs in His own everlasting arms. And so far as the "weariness" is concerned, we consent; we consent to be carried and find rest to our souls. But "heavy-laden,"—no, we cannot part with the heavy load. This responsibility, this nervousness about the absent, this household worry, this mercantile venture, this literary experiment, this invalid friend, we cannot transfer to Him who says, "Cast thy burden on the Lord," but even our bleared and sleepy eyes we open from time to time to see that it still is there, and ("O fools, and slow of heart!") when we can guard it no longer, the relaxing arms are still in attitude as if they enclasped it, all unconscious that it is now better cared for elsewhere.

3. Nay, we are in no mood for mocking. After all there is a weariness that cannot be prevented. It will come on. The work brings it on. The cross brings it on. Sometimes the very walk with God brings it on, for the flesh is weak; and at such moments we hear softer and sweeter than it ever floated in the wondrous air of Mendelssohn, "O rest in the Lord," for it has the sound of an immortal requiem: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they *rest* from their labours." Or as Dr. Preston, a man much given to holy meditation, said when dying: "I change my place, but not my company. Whilst here I have sometimes walked with God, and now I go to rest with Him."

SERMON XXVIII.

CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY.

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder: yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."—1 PETER v. 5.

BEAUTIFUL is every robe of God's providing. Himself He covereth with light as with a garment, and His people He arrays in vesture very suitable and lovely. "Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Consider that lily. It grows in some lowly place; in a ravine of the mountain, or bending over the brook in some sequestered meadow. It takes no thought about its supplies or its prospects—how long it shall flourish, or how much of summer it shall see before it wither and decay; but it takes the rain and the sunshine just as God sends them, and "grows;" grows without pride, never minding though no one comes to

admire it—seen of God and the angels, with its silver diadem, diffusing through all the place an air of purity, perhaps deepening the charm by some exquisite odour, and in its clothing suggesting thoughts which were never awakened by Solomon in all his glory.

No robes are so fair as those of God's own making. If you come into His presence arrayed in Christ's righteousness, that spotless dress will lend abundant beauty to the worshipper; and if you have the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," if you wear that crown of glory, "hoar hairs found in the way of righteousness," if you be clothed upon with lowlihood, it won't matter greatly whether your outward adorning include precious stones and fashionable apparel: in the sight of God and of good people you have got that which is of infinitely greater price.

God clothes the lily—how? Does He put a vesture over it? or does He paint the footstalk green and the anthers golden? Does He dip the calyx in molten amethyst, or with balm and moonbeams mingled make for it a robe of saintliness—a veil of vestal snow?

He gives it life, and gives it certain aptitudes; and then He sends the sunshine and the shower, and these, its food convenient, absorbed and assimilated, become at once its essence and its exquisite attire. He clothes it by feeding it. The lily grows, and the life within at last comes out in a blossomed loveliness which dims the pride of Solomon.

So it is by putting truth within—the true knowledge of God and of Himself—that the transforming Spirit

clothes the character with meekness—the man with lowly-mindedness and modesty.

The word is sometimes misapplied. There is a voluntary humility which is always vituperating itself, but which would be very sorry to be taken at its word: a vain-glorious egotism, which in its very confessions is fishing for compliments, and which thinks itself saintly for calling itself a miserable sinner. On the other hand, humility is not abject. Its judgment is according to truth, and even when most abased in God's presence, it may still hold fast its integrity in sight of its fellows. To be branded as a thief, a liar, a drunkard, and to accept the charge in the sense in which the world makes it, would be a strong presumption that the charge is true, but after all might only indicate that heartless effrontery or hopeless degradation which is as different from humility as self-respect is different from pride, as holy aspiration is different from a selfish or satanic ambition.

Humility, what is it? It is a gracious gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the same disposition which the Psalmist called a "broken heart," and that consciousness of need which Jesus had in view when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." So far as it has respect to God, it is that docility which is willing to learn what God teaches; that conscious penury which is willing to accept whatever God proffers; that submissiveness which is willing to do what God desires, and to endure whatever God deems needful. And so far as it has respect to man, it is that self-oblivion which is not indignant at being overlooked; that modesty which is not aware of its own importance;

that considerateness which, in reproving sin and in trying to rescue the sinner, recognises a brother or sister in the same condemnation, and in this development it is near of kin to that charity "which envieth not; which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

Humility is willing to learn whatever God teaches. And amongst the things which God teaches some are offensive to the pride of reason, and some offend our natural self-complacency. Such doctrines as Three Persons in the Godhead, yet one Jehovah; such doctrines as the Decrees of God, alongside of the accountableness of man; such doctrines as the entire Inspiration of Scripture, and yet the individual distinctness and human identity of its several parts; such doctrines as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and yet the free agency and personal consciousness of the believer in whom he dwells; as also the doctrines of Imputed Righteousness, and Justification by the obedience of another, and the Incarnation, and the Resurrection of the body: they do offend the pride of Reason. They have all been assaulted by unsanctified intellect; and had we time I could quote instances where every one of them has proved a stumbling-block to some individual or other in his attempt to enter the kingdom. They are not contrary to reason; but they are superior to reason. Had they not been handed down to us from the Upper Sanctuary, we never should have possessed them; and now that we have got them, we cannot piece them together so as to make a perfect whole. And it needs a

lowly mind to take these truths in their isolation. It needs humility to receive a thing as true, not because we can rationalize it, not because we can explain every difficulty and remove every objection, not because we can give it a triumphant place in our system, but because we are quite sure that God has said it.

And of the things which God has told us there are some which offend our carnal self-complacency. He assures us that none of us are good enough for Heaven; that except we be converted we can never go there; and He declares that the imaginations of our hearts are only evil continually. But it is sad to be told this, and very difficult to believe it,—so hard a saying that few can bear it. Most people acknowledge that some of their thoughts are bad: but that they are *only* evil is incredible. They do not find it so. They are sensible of many kind and benevolent thoughts, and many good intentions. They forget that these are the good intentions of a bad heart, the kind and benevolent feelings of a nature all wrong with God. They forget that like a shower which falls on a plain of salt, or like a fountain which springs up in a soil saturated with a poisonous ore, a feeling which would in itself be good, acquires a bitter flavour and a pestilent tincture by filtration through a mind at "enmity with God." And in the same way they fancy that were it not just for a few things, a few sins which they know of, they would have had a good hope of heaven; and even as it is they rather count on getting there. They feel as if there were more good about them than evil, and however proper for Jews and Pagans, they do not see

how such sayings can apply to them, "Except ye be converted,—except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of heaven." To look on themselves in the light of God's Word, to regard themselves as, apart from all particular acts of sin, so guilty and so vile that heaven would be polluted by their presence, this is such an inversion of man's natural pride and self-complacency, that none can produce it except the Spirit of God. Even Job, though a child of God, had much remaining self-esteem. He felt it a mysterious Providence which had left so good a man so stripped and shattered. He could recount to his visitors all the good deeds of his prosperous days,—how he had delivered the poor and fatherless and him that had no helper,—how the blessing of the outcast came on him, and how he caused the widow's heart to sing. "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause that I knew not, I searched out." But amidst all this boasting God revealed Himself to the Patriarch's soul, and having let forth upon him one ray of His glory, asked him If he had aught besides to say? But creeping into himself, and fain to creep into the earth, the Patriarch answered, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth," and when the Lord had spoken again, from among the potsherds a voice muttered, crushed and confounded, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

In all the human sciences, in astronomy, chemistry, physiology, mental philosophy, man may push his researches to the utmost. He may penetrate wherever fancy leads the way, and as far as facts conduct him. But within the province of things Divine he can only go as far as God Himself will guide him. He has no facts except those which God Himself supplies him, and it is both wisdom and humility to be content with these. You all remember the striking sentiment ascribed to the greatest of discoverers when dying:—"We have been like children gathering shells and pebbles on the beach; and I have sometimes been gratified by finding a prettier pebble than the rest: whilst all the while the great ocean of truth spread unfathomed before us." And that is the Christian's predicament. His beach is the Bible, his shore is only that little strip of truth which reaches from Genesis to Revelation; and there is a whole ocean of Divine knowledge which swells and throbs before him. But he must be content with the pearls and the precious stones which have been cast up and left above the tidal level. "The things revealed," the truths wafted to our feet, "belong to us and to our children;" and they are so precious and abundant that if we collect them carefully they will make our fortune in time, and promote us at last to heaven. Or perhaps a truer idea still of intellectual lowlihood within the religious province is that given by a Reformer of the Church in reference to the doctrine of the Trinity:—"In these matters I am so fearful that I dare speak no further, yea, almost none otherwise than as the Scripture doth lead me by the hand."

Within the Bible we have scope and verge enough; and it is our wisdom to put our hand in our Heavenly Father's hand, and follow where He leads. So for a season did the first of human beings. They were content with the truths which God told them; they were satisfied to keep on the solid table-land and cull the flowers and fruits along the path where a wise and loving Father led them. But there was a speculation which tempted them. From the face of a dizzy cliff there grew a goodly tree, and fair and sleek and bright, its apples sorely tempted them. But God had told them not to touch it. However, as they gazed, the richer and more radiant smiled the fruit, and from among the branches something whispered "Eat it, and be wise; eat it, and be gods." And letting go the hand which would have held them back, they ventured forward, and clutching at the nearest bough they caught an apple but lost their footing, and when bruised and sick and stunned they regained their consciousness, they found the squashed apple and the crumpled leaves;—but Paradise was lost, and they were ruined. And so when tempting theories, when flowers on the face of the precipice, or berries that overlook the gulf, invite you to gather them, remember Eden, remember the Forbidden Tree.

2. Humility is that conscious penury which is willing to accept whatever God proffers. And there are two things which in the Gospel He more particularly offers,—Righteousness and strength. Mary understood the genius of the Gospel when she sang, "He hath put down the

mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." And the Lord Jesus Himself gave utterance to the same truth in two different forms when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Except ye receive the kingdom of God as little children, ye can in nowise enter therein."

And perhaps, my dear friends, if those of you who have never got the full comfort of the Gospel would look narrowly into it, you might find that the hindrance is a want of humility. By the door of the Gospel a God of Love invites you to come into His peaceful presence; but though a wide door, it is wonderfully low—so low that none can enter who does not stoop. You say that you have striven to enter, but have not been able. Are you sure that there was no high thought, no proud imagination which prevented you? Are you sure that there was no stiff prepossession, no theological prejudice even, which encumbered and hampered you? Have you not thought that it was after so much conviction of sin, after so much contrition that you were entitled to rejoice in Christ Jesus? Are you ready, not as a penitent, not as an earnest inquirer, not as a hopeful convert, but are you ready as a mere sinner to rejoice in Christ Jesus? Are you ready to rejoice in Him, not when you have "made out" your title to Him, but now, and upon that title which God gives you to Him? for God makes Him your righteousness and redemption. Are you humble enough to

accept the great Salvation without money and without price? Are you humble enough to accept the pardon of your sins without any prepayment? without so much as the prepayment of humility? In the Bible God has provided for us sinners a complete Saviour, and an appreciation of Him, such a value for Him as is occasioned by perceiving our own worthlessness and nothingness; such an appreciation of Him is all that is needful to give us entire and personal possession of Him. And the reason why we get so little satisfaction in the Saviour is that we do not see,—Jesus is Wealth, and I am Poverty; Jesus is Merit, and I am Guilt; Jesus is Righteousness, and I am Sin. We go down to Joseph to buy bread for our famine, but we have filled the sacks with the sand of the desert,—with notions and fancies of our own; and we will not let them be emptied, and then wonder how it is that after going to the granary we get so little corn. We cross the howling wilderness, and come where the fountains flow with milk and wine; and we read the inscription, "Buy without price;" but we have been carrying these many days some brackish water which we collected at Marah, and as it was once very precious we cannot bear even now to cast it away: and so, half-filled with brine, we plunge in the fountain the water-sack or the bottle, and grudge that the comfort is not so pure, the consolation so abundant, as we were led to expect.

The reason why the publican returned from the Temple justified was that he had got that lowly and self-emptied mind to which the grace of God is welcome. It was not his standing afar off merely, nor his dejected eyes, nor his

smiting on his breast, but his despair of himself and his hope in God's mercy—"God be merciful to me a sinner." And you will be justified too, when, losing all confidence in the flesh, you learn to rejoice in Christ Jesus. And it will be a good evidence that you have already got the blessing for which you seek, when, conscious that you are less than the least of all saints, it is your language,

> "Dear Lord! I ask no crown from Thee,
> No robe with rich perfume:
> The meanest place will do for me,
> And in the lowest room."

But it is not only justifying merit which the humble soul seeks in the Saviour; it finds in Him a fountain of unfailing might. "In the Lord Jehovah have I righteousness *and strength*." To the believer the Lord Jesus is the great source of vitality and vigour. He is weak in himself, but he is strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might; and should it be some great trial to which he is summoned, some crisis which needs energy of action or of endurance, it may find him in either of these states. It may find him cold and carnal, and then he gets fluttered and panic-struck at the prospect before him; or perhaps he rushes forth to encounter it in the strength of his natural spirit, or in a paroxysm of self-kindled courage, and in that case he will fare as well or as ill as common worldlings do. Or this conjuncture may overtake him at a time when he is looking unto Jesus; and then, instead of mustering up his natural prowess, he takes hold of his Redeemer's might, and in His name goes calmly and confidently forward. At such a moment he can see himself

as the mere weapon wielded by a mightier hand, the mere mechanism filled by a mightier force, and in the self-abandonment of a lowly faith he leaves himself in the Lord's hand, feeling that what he now achieves "it is not I, but the grace of God in me."

3. Finally, Humility is that submissive and acquiescent mood of mind which is willing to do, to undergo, and to become whatever may be God's good pleasure. The proud man's life is often a controversy with his condition, in other words, a battle with the will of God. If arrested by sickness, he is enraged at the untimely interruption. If baffled in some project, he is ready to curse God and die. And if entangled in some unforeseen calamity, he rages like a wild bull in a net. Look at Napoleon in St. Helena, look at John in Patmos! Look at many a worldling when he has lost his fortune! Look at Wilberforce when he lost his! Read the last days of Keats the Poet, and the last days of Brainerd the Missionary. Both died very young; both died of the same disease; both had minds very different from the common order; both were arrested in the great project of their lives, and both had exactly the same personal reason for wishing still to linger in the world. The poet regarded his disease as a horrible misfortune, and dictated as his epitaph,

> "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

And to a friend he writes, "I wish for death every day and every night, to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains, which are better than nothing. Land and sea, weak-

ness and decline, are great separaters, but death is the great divorcer for ever." The last words which the Missionary entered in his journal were, "My soul was this day sweetly set on God: I longed to be with Him, that I might behold His glory. I felt sweetly disposed to commit all to Him, even my dearest friends, my dearest flock, and my closest brother, and all my concerns for time and eternity. Oh that His kingdom might come in the world; that they might all love and glorify Him for what He is in Himself; and that the Blessed Redeemer might see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Oh! come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen." And about the last words he uttered were, "Are you willing to part with me? I am willing to part with you. Though if I thought I should not see you, and be happy with you in another world, I could not bear to part with you. But we shall spend a happy eternity together." He said nothing about his epitaph. And though you may say that in his case the hope of immortality made all the difference, we allow it made much, but it did not make all. Even where there is that hope in all its plenitude, it needs a submissive mind to feel that God's time is the best.

And so in regard to other things. The proud man feels that a great many employments are beneath his dignity. He frets at them because they do no justice to his talents, his acquirements, his expectations. The humble man, whatever be the post or station which God assigns him, is content; and far from insisting that he shall be a corner-stone or a pinnacle in the Scheme of Providence, he is

thankful if the Great Architect shall use him in the structure at all, though it were only as a peg in the roof, as a wedge in the wall. The proud man is constantly murmuring that he wants some faculty or power which his neighbour enjoys; but the humble man knows that the clay must not say to the potter, "Why hast thou made me thus?" The proud man is apt to be crushed and chagrined, and look forward to life's sequel with a less sanguine emotion if he lose the strength, or the beauty, or the brilliant address in which once he gloried; but living not to himself, and aware that his Master can make up for every deficiency, like the Apostle, the humble man "most gladly glories in infirmities, if so be that the power of Christ may rest upon him."

And now, in urging upon your minds and my own the duty of cultivating this grace—humility before God—I might remind you that Humility is only another name for Truth. "It is because the convictions and feelings which go to make a man humble, it is because these convictions and feelings are correct and just, that Humility is in God's sight so precious." "Pride is the growth of blindness and darkness, humility the product of light and knowledge; and whilst pride has its origin in a mistaken or delusive estimate of things, Humility is as much the offspring of Truth as the parent of Virtue." When a man knows himself and knows God he cannot but be humble. When he knows his own ignorance, and how finite are his faculties, but recollects that the speaker who in this Book addresses him is the all-comprehending Jehovah, this makes him modest and docile, and with Mary he sits

down at the feet of Jesus. When he knows his own sinfulness and Jehovah's purity, when he sees the Son of God on the Cross of Calvary, and sees sin piercing and bruising the Saviour, that gives him a broken and contrite spirit, and with Job he exclaims, "Now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself," and, with the penitents described by the prophet, he mourns and is in bitterness. When he knows God's munificence and his own necessities, when he sees that if he himself be guilt and weakness, God has replenished the Mediator's person with strength and righteousness, these two things seen together produce that receptivity of spirit which is content to owe everything to God's mere goodness, and out of Christ's fulness receives grace for grace. And when he knows God's power and wisdom, his sovereignty and kindness, and at the same time realizes his own creatureship, he humbles himself under the mighty hand of God, and is content that a God so good and holy should do with him whatever seems best in His sight. And all these feelings are most correct and true. They have no merit, for they are only right. But so long as you want these feelings you are wrong. The proud man's lip is a continued falsehood. He is constantly gainsaying and contradicting God. He sets himself up as wiser than God. Nay, he sets himself up as more just, more equitable, more righteous than God; and whilst he grudges at God's goodness in one direction, he rebels at God's severity in another, and practically declares, "God's ways are not equal." And when, in His amazing generosity, God opens the treasures of his grace, and says, "Ask, and ye shall receive," with Laodicean ar-

rogance he replies, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." And so long as the man thus walks contrary to God, God walks contrary to him. God resisteth the proud. And it is not till the man sees matters more in God's clearest light—more as they really are—that the mind of God and the mind of that man come to agree; and the more of God's testimony he credits, the more of his intrinsic nothingness and actual vileness he realizes, the more of His grace God gives him.

Pride and self-conceit are terrible tormentors. You laugh at the proud Marquis[1] who travelled all over Europe bolt upright, never once touching the back of his carriage; and when the haughty commoner refused to let the prince see the palace of his pride, you are glad that the gates open to the sheriff's officer and the auctioneer, which were flung in the face of royalty.

But if a haughty spirit cometh before destruction, God giveth grace to the humble. Affable, contented, obliging, grateful, humility grows in favour with God and with the people around, and never lacks the materials of a continual feast. It cannot be snubbed; it cannot be crossed; it never bites its lips at some bitter mortification; it never burns with revenge at some gross insult: for in as far as it is true humility, slights and affronts and contradictions are weapons to which it is quite invulnerable, whilst the bounties of Providence and the good offices of friendship touch all its sensibilities.

"This Valley of Humiliation is fat ground, and con-

[1] Abercorn.

sisteth much in meadows. Behold how green it is, and how beautified with lilies! I have known many labouring men that have got good estates in it (for God resisteth the proud, but gives more, more grace to the humble). Now, as they were going along, and talking, they espied a boy feeding his father's sheep. The boy was in very mean clothes, but of a very fresh and well-favoured countenance; and as he sat by himself he sung. They hearkened, and he said,

He that is down needs fear no fall,
  He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
  Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
  Little be it, or much;
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
  Because Thou savest such.

Fulness to such a burden is
  That go on pilgrimage;
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
  Is best from age to age.

"Then said their guide, Do you hear him? I will dare to say that this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more of that herb called heart's-ease in his bosom than he that is clad in silk and velvet. In this Valley our Lord formerly had His country-house. He loved much to be here. He loved also to walk these meadows, for He found the air was pleasant. This is a Valley that nobody walks in but those that love a pilgrim's life. And though Christian had the hard hap to meet here with Apollyon, and to enter with him a brisk encounter, yet I must tell

you that in former times men have met with angels here, have found pearls here, and have in this place found the words of life.

"Then said Mercy, I think I am as well in this Valley as I have been anywhere else in all our journey. The place, methinks, suits with my spirit."

SERMON XXIX.

BURDEN-BEARING.

"Every man shall bear his own burden."—GAL. VI. 5.

BURDEN-BEARING is one of the least popular forms of human exertion. It seems the very badge of bondage. When Pharaoh inflicted so many cruelties on Israel, the *load they had to carry* is always the prominent idea. "The Egyptians did set over them taskmasters, to afflict them with their *burdens*." "Moses went out and looked on their *burdens*." "The king of Egypt said, Get ye to your *burdens*;" as if the skilled labour of the builder and the hard exhaustive toil of the brick-moulder were nothing to the hateful task of the hodman and barrowman.

And most people share the feeling. We don't like to carry a burden, still less do we like to be seen doing it. The burden is associated with the hulks and hard labour, with the hewing of wood and the drawing of water; and except it be the book, which looks learned, or the musket, which looks martial, we don't like to be caught carrying anything. It is not genteel; it does not look as if we had a servant under us, to whom we could say, Do this, and he doeth it; Take this, and he taketh it.

Yet we cannot help ourselves. There is a great deal

to be carried in this world. In the shape of taxation or personal service, every citizen has got to bear the burden of the State, and most people have to bear more or less the burden of a family, of a business, of some special avocation. And shoulders highly born are often the most heavily burdened. As he looks through his Belgravian window, and sees the coal-heaver carrying the fuel which is to brighten the mansion all winter, the statesman may well envy that grimy giant; for at dusk there will be an end of this toil, and the broad back will rest it on the empty sacks of the homeward-bound waggon, or on the couch of dreamless slumber. But for the adviser of the Crown—for the man on whom cometh daily the care of all the colonies, or the care of all our commerce—there is no such respite. In the easiest chair the load is still pressing, and it keeps him groaning in his sleep. As the omnibus lets down the rich banker at the gate, and he puts into his breast-pocket the oft-read letter, the tattered boy who with the portmanteau follows him up the avenue is the more lightly laden of the two; the ragged satellite who carries the luggage will get a shilling, but Crœsus would gladly give a thousand pounds to any one who would carry for him the load which was enclosed in that crumpled letter, but which has now got farther in and weighs upon his heart, and which he will have to carry up into that drawing-room, nor unbind as he sits down at that brilliant dinner-table, and under which he will have to move up and down the ball-room, smiling, dancing, gaily jesting, as he trips to and fro on his invisible tight-rope, an anxious, overladen acrobat.

For every man has his own burden. There is, first of all, the burden of personal responsibility. As we read in the foregoing verse: "Let every man prove (or examine) his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." It is perfectly true, and we rejoice to remember, that the very foundation of Christianity is the vicarious principle—the substitution for the many sinful of the sinless One; but quite compatible with this, and co-ordinate, is the other principle of individual accountability. In other words, Christ is the great Burden-bearer—the Lamb of God who beareth (*αἴρων*) the sin of the world; but in order to enjoy the benefit of His interposition, I must distinctly and for myself take advantage of it. In the words of the hymn, I must

> ". . . lay my sins on Jesus,
> The spotless Lamb of God,"

and, conscious of my lost estate, must seek a personal share in the common salvation.

This coming to Christ is the commencement of Christianity. It is the first step in religion, and it is a step which each of you must take for himself. No other can do it for you. A friend may pray for you; a friend may give you good advice or useful information; he may set the truth vividly before you, or may dispel some of your doubts and difficulties; but a friend's faith will not be accepted as your faith; a friend's piety will not insure your salvation.

You may deem this too obvious to need any special mention, and may account it a waste of time the dwelling on such truisms, but far more trite than any truism is the

contradiction between our profession and our conduct. Take care lest you yourself fall into this fallacy; take care lest you be resting on another's faith when you should be resting on your own Saviour. True, you have a godly father and a praying mother, but do you pray yourself? Are you yourself living godly, righteously, and soberly? True, you are surrounded by Christian people, but are you yourself one of them? "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," and, when we do so, no fellow-creature can answer for us,—"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God,"[1]—every one of us must then bear his own burden, and if he has not sought salvation betimes, he will find that the blame is altogether his own.

So, my dear friends, let every man prove his own work, so as to have rejoicing in yourself alone, and not in another. Be not content to belong to a Christian family—do not take for granted that you are a Christian because you are in many good things associated with Christian people; but see to it that you are really resting on the foundation which God Himself has laid; that you have really given yourself to the service of the Saviour; and if there is any doubt, do it, and do it at once; take with you words; make the matter explicit to yourself; and for this end do not use customary or conventional language, which is too apt to be a mere compliment to the Most High, and so a mere quietus to our own conscience. But with all distinctness and all reverence tell the Saviour what is your impression of His character and His claims, and if

[1] Rom. xiv. 10, 12.

you really feel that His Atonement is sufficient, and that His claims are paramount, give yourself up to Him as a sinner who would be saved by His merits, as a subject and servant who is willing to be governed by His rules, and who would fain live to His glory. So shall you have rejoicing in the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour, your own Master and Friend, and not another's; and instead of the precarious profession which is propped up by the surrounding piety, and which draws its chief comfort from the good opinion of its neighbours, yours will be the clear personal persuasion of one who knows whom he has believed, and who can say, "I am the Lord's, and He is mine."

Let every man examine his own sincerity, for every man must bear his own burden—the burden of his own sin—unless he has transferred it to the appointed Saviour.

This personal responsibility comes out still further in the formation of character. We have a comprehensive rule and a perfect pattern, and it is the business of our lives, the burden of the Lord, to be building ourselves up in our holy faith, adding to ourselves every excellence. But instead of proving their own work, and making progress with it, many derive an unsatisfactory comfort from the defects of others. "A man is overtaken in a fault," and there is at once a subtle self-complacent feeling, "God, I thank thee that I am not as that man." "Here is a religious profession which has exploded in fraud and downright dishonesty; here is a man who passes muster amongst the godly, but I would rather beg my bread than earn it by his screwiness and shabbiness; here is another

who subscribes to societies and sits on committees, but he is a perfect tyrant at home, and I often fear lest his terrible temper should one day end in some frightful tragedy." It may be so; but suppose you employed a workman, and, at the close of the day, when he came for his wages, there was no progress made, but he told you a long story how he had taken his walks abroad, and what shameful scamping work was going on at Victoria Villas—how they were running up mere shells, which would hardly hold together till the tenant came in; and did you hear that shocking story of the new house in Paradise Place, which came down when they were putting on the roof, and killed the foreman carpenter? It may be so, would be your answer, but you should have minded your own business. You were employed to rear this structure, not to run about and espy the faults of others; but all day long you have never laid a brick nor touched a trowel. You wicked and slothful servant, you quit my service, nor shall you receive one farthing of my money.

We are here under the guidance of God's Word and Spirit to form our own character, day by day building ourselves upward, and there is great risk of deceiving ourselves. There is the risk of mistaking for personal progress our perception of others' short-comings; there is the risk of confounding the critical with the constructive faculty, and so fancying that we ourselves must be something superior, because we see so clearly the infirmities and failings of others; and there is the risk of taking for our standard not the requirements of God's own Word, but the attainments of the society around us; and "if a

man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

There is the burden of Toil. Among the steep precipitous mountains of Thibet the traveller meets long processions of hungry, ill-clad Chinamen, carrying enormous loads of tea. There they go, many of them old men, and women and children even, climb, climbing day after day up the rough sides of the mountain, each with his great burden on his back, eyes fixed on the ground, all silent, stepping slowly, and leaning on great iron-pointed sticks, till the leader of the gang gives the signal for a halt, and, after standing a few minutes, "the heavy weight again falls on the back and head, the body is again bent towards the ground, and the caravan is once more in motion."[1] You do not wonder that, with a task so monotonous, these poor drudges should acquire a dreary stupid look, little better than beasts of burden; and you feel sorry for those in whose lives there is a large amount of the like irksome and exhausting routine. And yet there are many who, in order to earn their daily bread, must go through a similar task; for hours together every day of the life-long history plying a vocation which does not improve the mind nor engage the feelings; ministering to the instruction or enjoyment of others, with small participation themselves; fashioning the musical instrument, but seldom present at the musical festival; fabricating the beautiful garment, but themselves in coarse attire:

[1] Huc's *Chinese Empire*, ch. 1.

setting up the types, but seldom reading the consecutive pages of the philosopher or poet; carrying the fragrant packages which are to cheer and comfort the stranger, but exiles from the Flowery Land where they were gathered, and aliens in the wealthy land to which they are conveyed.

And the burden of Sorrow. "Sorrow dwells beneath a king's robe as much as beneath a peasant's cloak; the star of the noble, the warrior's corslet, the courtier's silken vesture, cannot shut it out. That rural home is such a picture of peace, we cannot believe that care or tears are there. That noble castle amidst ancient trees is surely lifted up in its calm grandeur above sighs and sadness. Alas! it is not so. Man is the tenant of both, and wherever man dwells sorrow is sure to be with him."[1] And some griefs are very burdensome. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and there are griefs which you must carry alone. Here is a manly spirit struggling with adverse circumstances, and striving to provide things honest in the sight of men, who little guess how much the effort costs him. There is a nature nobler still, who, mated to a savage or a sot, contrives to hide the faults which she cannot cure, and with the halo of her own saintliness gives a charm to her abode often not so obvious in a happier home. Here is one who, taking counsel with his soul, has sorrow in his heart daily, perplexed by mysteries in Providence, or brooding over those hard questions which man will still insist on asking, though hopeless of the answer. And yonder is another, who is carrying to the grave a hidden grief—a grief which no

[1] Kennaway's *Sermons* (1845), i. 152, altered.

other can divide, for there is no chance that he will ever make it known, and which with the secluding effect of a mournful secret helps to make him a stranger in the earth; that pensive smile in which the old, the original man, looks out no longer; that impress on the countenance which, like an escutcheon above the gate, tells that at some unknown date a great joy went forth to return no more; the silent deserted look which the house puts on when there are chambers which no one enters now, and which no longer expect an occupant; a soul with affections for which the owner has now no use, and in a little corner of which himself dwells dimly, like the forfeited peer hiring apartments in the castle which was once his own.

The very body sometimes grows burdensome; so weak, so tortured, so disobedient to the mind, so powerless for all effective performance, taking up so much time, costing so much trouble. However airy and spacious the tent once was, now that it has collapsed—now that the main prop has broken, and now that in cold and clammy folds the wet canvas enclasps us—we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, and would fain escape from the ruin to a mansion more lightsome and permanent, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Every man must bear his own burden; and yet, as we have said, there is one burden which it is wrong to bear. It is a sin and a shame to you if you are still plodding along under the burden of unpardoned transgression; a sin and a shame, for you refuse Him who saith, Come to

me, ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; a sin and a shame, for you frustrate the grace of God, and practically declare that it is better this burden should be borne by yourself than transferred to the sin-bearing Surety. And as long as guilt remains unconfessed and unforgiven, you are weak for the other burdens which must be borne; the best energies of the soul are absorbed and wasted in the sullen endurance of a misery from which God in the Gospel offers to free you, and with fear of God's anger or a doubtful sense of His favour, you go heavily and work heartlessly, and, like a man walking in fetters, feel every load doubled, so long as you are a burden to yourself.

The load of guilt, the feeling that our sin is too great for the blood of Christ to expiate, or the grace of God to pardon,—this burden it is wrong to bear; but there are other things given us to carry, some of them the lot of humanity, and some of them manifestly the appointment of Providence—so manifestly that they might almost be inscribed "The burden of the Lord;"—pain and sorrow, responsibility, special and arduous service, implication in the fate of others—some things there are which we cannot shift off, and some which it will be more to our advantage and credit if we carry manfully, cheerfully, Christianly.

Amongst those who want situations there is no class more numerous than "light porters," but in the Lord's great house of this world there are few appointments for such—few porters wanted who will have nothing to carry; and some who, like Issachar, couch down between the

burdens, who want to take life easily, and so evade the task which the moment brings, only entail extra toil and sorrow on their life's remainder. "Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens, for he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant," and so leaving others to fight the Philistines, he chose an early settlement and a tempting location. The consequence was, that he was never thenceforth entirely his own master. He bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute. The strong ass was lazy, and couched down between the burdens, but the burdens were sponges, and the place where Issachar lay down was the middle of the ford, and so he rose up far more weighted than before he couched down, and went on his way dejected and heavily laden.

Bear your burden manfully. Boys at school, young men who have exchanged boyish liberty for serious business—all who have got a task to do, a work to finish—bear the burden till God gives the signal for repose—till the work is done and the holiday is fairly earned.

The burden, rightly carried, will do you good. There was a notion in the time of Pliny, that the way to make the palm-tree perpendicular was to load it. If it leaned on one side there attach a weight, and, with a noble resistance, it would incline the other way and recover its erectness. And sure enough some of the most upright and most aspiring Christians are the most heavily laden. The weight which would have broken down a poorer spirit, which would have dragged into the mud the mere earthling, shows that there is One in them who is not in the

world, and, whilst it cures them of the general crookedness, it gives an impulse to their growth and sends them far above our heads—far above the dust, straight and strong, with branches bright and ever green, and pointing to Heaven.

O Christian, no sorrow need crush you, for, when the worst comes to the worst, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." That burden may make you grave, your steps measured, and your features sedate or anxious, but there are worse sights than seriousness, and to a wise man it is a comfort to see that all are not frivolous and bent on mere amusement. That burden may make you sigh. If so, it makes you none the less like to Him who, with all conditions of life to choose from, chose a sad one, and who in bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows, at last became sorrowful even unto death. But whatever it does, that burden need never break your back nor crush out your spirit. Through Christ strengthening, you are well able to bear it, and if you learn the right art of carrying, it will grow a great deal easier—it will improve your gait—and whilst it enables you to serve your generation, it will make especially welcome the journey's end, with its "Rest and be thankful."

SERMON XXX.

BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—GAL. VI. 2.

SERIOUSNESS, if it be not enlightened and warmed by the Gospel, is apt to degenerate into mere superstition. If our conception of the Most High be cold and contracted, instead of serving Him with gladness—instead of walking before Him in love and glorious liberty,—we shall try to propitiate Him with punctilious rites, and rigid, perhaps painful, observances.

With the Galatian Christians it had been a short-lived summer. They were originally a devout and desirous people (Jews), whose reverential sentiments had been developed and deepened by the Mosaic economy, and when Christ was revealed to them as the end of the law for righteousness, they were filled with relief and rejoicing. On the one hand, it was unspeakable relief to find the law fulfilled—the bow which for so many centuries had found no man of might sufficient, now fully bent by the Captain of Salvation, and through the golden centre of supreme fulfilment the arrow sent unerring. On the other hand, it was a joy to find God dwelling in the midst of men, as

present as the promise of a disappearing Saviour, and as propitious as the acceptor of that Saviour's sacrifice. In Jesus Christ, "evidently set forth" and rightly understood, they found emancipation from the legal spirit, and at the same time the inspiration of a new obedience. They joyed in God as those who had received the Atonement, and they not only walked at liberty, but they ran. They ran in the way of God's commandments, and so "ran well." They were "new creatures," no longer creeping timidly, and at every fearful sound anxious and arrested, reptile-fashion, but eagles mounting upward on soaring pinion, seeking the nearer sunshine, and in all the wide horizon seeing nothing that could harm them.

That short summer was ended. They had allowed Judaizing teachers to come in between them and Christ crucified: the sun was intercepted,—the light and warmth of the Gospel—and they were growing very like their former selves, legal, punctilious, hampered, trusting a little in Christ, but a great deal more in their own circumcision, and full of those evil passions which come into the mind when the Spirit of God goes forth. They were hardly "new creatures" any longer, for they were more in Moses than "in Christ." "Fallen from grace," their wings were broken, and, instead of soaring or running, they grovelled,—regarded as lost men by their former co-religionists, and yet with a very scanty enjoyment of the Gospel salvation.

Practically, many Christians are in the same position. They are as much *in* Moses as "in Christ," and not so much new creatures as anomalous creatures—like the

Galatians, a sort of griffin, or dragon, or winged reptile—with an eye not made for looking at the sun, and with pinions which rarely lift them into higher regions—which rarely give them the wide horizon and the dwelling-place, at once secure and serene, of those who, upborne by the Comforter, look down at safe distance on the snare of the fowler and the noisome pestilence. Instead of looking at Christ till they imbibe from Him strength and joy, holy aspiration and confidence Godward—instead of looking at Christ till He draws them upward, out of their selfishness, out of their sin, out of their unbelief, on towards Himself, they look at faith, or they look at conversion, and wonder how they are to get it; and as it is a very dim comfort that they derive from the Saviour, so it is a very faint reflection of His spirit and character which comes through their murky atmosphere.

This is a long introduction, but it is not irrelevant. This letter is addressed to people who were losing their Christianity, and who, as a consequence, were becoming cross-grained and critical, controversial and quarrelsome, and more inclined to "bite and devour" one another (v. 15) than to bear one another's burdens. And in order to understand our text, it is absolutely essential to look back a little way, and see the purport of the exhortations preceding.

Chapter v. 13-15. Christ is the Emancipator. From the yoke of ordinances and punctilious observances He has released you, and the strength which was once needful for burdensome ceremonies is now available for a more blessed and benevolent business, loving service to one

another. You are zealous for the law, but its essence may be expressed in one sentence,—Love thy neighbour as thyself. You who are Christians are to be mutual comforts, mutual conservators, and even if a man be overtaken in a fault, do not at once cast him off. Ye who claim to be spiritual, by every kind and wise effort seek to recover him, and restore his soul into the paths of righteousness. Let his fall be your sorrow, his recovery your study. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;" that law spoken of in ch. v. 14.

The law of Jesus Christ was loving-kindness. His business was benevolence, and He Himself was pre-eminently the great Burden-Bearer. If we would resemble Him, we must

(1.) Raise up the fallen. This was hardly ever attempted till Christ set the pattern. People went wrong, and the world let them go; they broke the laws, and the magistrate punished; they became a scandal, and society cast them out,—out of the synagogue, out of the city, out of the world. But with a moral tone infinitely higher, Christ taught a more excellent way. Having come to seek and to save that which was lost, He sent the Church on the same errand, and by parables like the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son, not only did He open the door of hope to the foolish wanderer and the worthless profligate, but by the poor outcasts over whom He pronounced words of pardon and pity, and the mad demoniacs whom He dispossessed and tamed and brought to their right mind, He showed the omnipotence of kindness—He showed that, far as man's wickedness can go, Divine compassion can go fur-

ther. He showed that fierce as is man's depravity, the Spirit of God is stronger.

And, my dear friends, those of you are most Christ-like who are most compassionate—not the most tolerant of evil, but the most intent on saving the transgressor. In almost every case of criminality there is a great deal to provoke and irritate; but after all, is there not more to pity? Is it not sad to see a soul embruted and debased, shut out from pure and holy pleasures, and led captive by the devil at his will? Is it not sad to think of its undone eternity, and of the long hopeless anguish which awaits it, unless you or some friendly angel come betimes to its rescue? And is it not sad to picture the evil it may propagate, the much good which it may destroy unless its career be arrested, and the numbers which it may involve in its ruin? Oh, you do well who, in the spirit of the Master, go after the one lost sheep in the wilderness. You do well who take pains, and put yourself about to reclaim a single wanderer. Happy will you be if you snatch one brand from the burning—if you turn one sinner from the error of his ways, and so save from death an immortal soul.

(2.) Bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom. xv. 1). That is, hold up those who are in danger of falling. A nurse cherishing her children has a good deal of trouble with the one who is beginning to go alone; it is a time so fruitful in falls and contusions and soiled dresses; still it is better to take some pains and teach the art of walking, rather than to have to carry him all his days. And the invalid —the convalescent, may a little tax your strength as you

give him your arm in his first tottering journey round the garden, but you do not grudge it; you are thankful that he is come this length, and for the walk of to-day he will be stronger to-morrow. Rather trying are the infirmities of the weak. Very tiresome is a continual touchiness in a neighbour, or the perpetual recurrence of the same faults in a pupil or a child. But if by self-restraint and right treatment God should enable you to cure those faults, from how much shame and sorrow do you rescue *them*—from how much suffering *yourself!* Don't grudge the trouble, and remember that in this form of effort there can never be total failure—in trying to cure the patient, the physician heals himself. In combating his bad temper, you are obliged to conquer your own; and in order to expel from that other sullenness, self-indulgence, petulance, you are compelled to go to God, and beg for your own spirit a larger supply of sweetness, generosity, long-suffering, and all those noble radiant attributes, which in the contest with depravity make the sun-like Christian more than conqueror.

(3.) It is not the lesson of the text, but it is not alien from the context when we add, "Bear one another's trials." Some are heavy laden. With one it is the burden of poverty; with another it is pain or failing strength, the extinction of a great hope, or the loss of some precious faculty. You are a Christian, and he is your neighbour. Lend a hand, and help him with his load. Be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame. That poor widow, try to find employment for the eldest child, and instruction for the rest. That garment which you yourself care to wear

no longer might still give warmth and comfort to joints which already feel presentiments of winter. That sum of money which you had destined for a day of pleasure or some festive demonstration might be the apprentice-fee of some friendless lad, or might extricate from crushing difficulties a deserving family, and so, without ceasing to be a day's pleasure to you, might prolong itself into the thankful years of the one, the prosperous lifetime of the other.

"Bear one another's burdens." A little thing will sometimes ease the pressure. In a country road you have seen the weary beast with foaming flanks straining onward with the overladen cart, and ready to give in: when the kindly waggoner called a halt, and, propping up the shaft with a slim rod or a stake from the hedgerow, he patted and praised the willing creature, till after a little rest they were ready to resume the rough track together. Many a time a small prop is quite sufficient. A zealous female teacher amongst the Nestorians writes to a friend, "It was Sabbath afternoon, and I was seated on a mat in the middle of the earthen floor of the church. I had already attended Sabbath-school and a prayer-meeting with my pupils, and weary I longed for rest. Then I remembered that after that came my meeting with the women readers of the village, and oh! how desirable seemed rest. But God sent it in an unexpected way, for a woman came and seated herself directly behind me, so that I could lean on her, and invited me to do so. I declined, but she drew me back, saying, 'If you love me, lean hard.' Very refreshing was that support. Then came

the Master's own voice, repeating the words 'If you love *me*, lean hard;' and I leaned on Him too, feeling that it was Himself who had preached me a sermon through that poor woman. I was rested long before the services were over; then I spent an hour with the women, and after sunset rode six miles to my own home. I wondered that I was not weary that night nor next morning, and I have rested ever since on those sweet words, 'If you love me, lean hard.'"[1] Often a very slender support will suffice, and many is the burden which a timely word has lightened, a recognising nod, a cheering smile, a cup of cold water, a lift in the home-going car, or half-an-hour's help from a stronger arm or more experienced fingers.

By thus bearing others' burdens you fulfil the law of Christ. His plan for the renovation of society does not leave out Self-Help, whilst all through it proceeds on the assumption of Heavenly Help; but at the same time it leaves large place for mutual help, the help which having received from God we give to one another. *God's way for making the world's burden less is to make the Church's shoulders stronger.* "Lord, increase our faith," make the molecule, the atom, at least as large as a mustard-seed, for then we could remove the mountain. Our resources are sufficient if the vital force were present. We have a Bible sufficient for the world's enlightenment, a Gospel sufficient for the world's salvation, a Saviour sufficient for the world's enrichment; but till our faith, our heart, our fervour be at least as large as a grain of mustard-seed, we cannot move the mountain, we cannot lift the world, we

[1] *Woman and her Saviour in Persia* (Boston, 1863), p. 64.

cannot heave off that mighty load of misery which a ruined race have pulled down upon themselves. O Saviour, give us a grain of faith, a grasp of Thee however feeble, some small portion of Thy Spirit, that we may fulfil Thy law, and, loving our neighbour as ourself, may draw him on to the love of Thee.

By thus bearing others' burdens you will lighten your own. Rogers the poet has preserved a story which was told him by a Piedmontese nobleman. "I was weary of life, and, after a melancholy day, was hurrying along the street to the river, when I felt a sudden check. I turned and beheld a little boy, who had caught the skirt of my cloak in his anxiety to solicit my notice. His look and manner were irresistible. Not less so was the lesson he had learnt: 'There are six of us, and we are dying for want of food.' Why should I not, said I to myself, relieve this wretched family? I have the means, and it will not delay me many minutes. The scene of misery he conducted me to, I cannot describe. I threw them my purse, and their burst of gratitude overcame me. It filled my eyes; it went as a cordial to my heart. 'I will call again to-morrow,' I cried. Fool that I was, to think of leaving a world where such pleasure was to be had, and so cheaply."[1] There is many a load which only grows less by giving a lift to another. Life itself is apt to grow burdensome to the self-centred pleasure-seeker, and there are some who in resultless speculations become so absorbed and exhausted that their intellectual being becomes a burden to itself. For such the best prescription

[1] Rogers' *Italy*—"Foreign Travel," p. 182.

is practical philanthropy. Try to do some good. Confront the material evil, the palpable miseries around you, and try to make them less. If you succeed, and you *will* succeed, the happiness of others will be a balm for the healing of your own wounds, and as you advance in the experiment you will land on results which pure reason did not anticipate. You will find that for lessening your own sorrows it is a good plan to share the sorrows of others, and that for lessening both theirs and yours there is no method so effectual as recourse to a Saviour's sympathy.

In order to bear either your own burden or the burdens of other people, you must take hold of that Saviour's strength. You are weak, but He is mighty. Your own patience will soon be exhausted; He fainteth not, neither is weary. He alone can so fill you with goodness that, instead of being overcome of evil, you will overcome evil with good; and in the difficult questions which sometimes occur as to which is the truest kindness or the best form of assisting another, you can have no better adviser than the wonderful Counsellor.

Alas for those who, instead of making the world's load the less, are making it greater. Woe unto you who bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders. Shame to the able-bodied or well-educated youth who, making no exertion for himself, is content to be maintained at the cost of his parents, or by loans borrowed from soft-hearted sisters. Shame and infamy to the sturdy churl whose god is his belly, and who, spending on drink and dainty viands the wages of

the week, leaves a thin and haggard wife to earn a subsistence for their hapless children. Woe to you whose cunning indolence shifts over on meek and uncomplaining shoulders the burden you are paid for carrying; and woe to you whose tyrannical exacting arrogance or unpleasant splenetic humours are imposing a perpetual burden on all who are the least dependent on you.

How sinful and how sad, and oh! how needless! What a pity that we should be mutual tormentors, when the Lord Jesus invites us to be mutual comforters. If the mind were in us which was in Him, it would not be in the power of circumstances to make us wretched. The devil himself could do us no material damage. But *a dim Gospel makes a cold Christian, a distant Saviour makes a halting, hesitating disciple.* Let us draw so near as to have our doubts and fears dispelled, and let us keep so near that we shall not mistake other marks for the footsteps of the Forerunner,—so near that in our bright benevolence and friendly offices and universal helpfulness we shall be recognised as the followers of that great Burden-Bearer who, though laden with the griefs and sorrows of so many, still went about continually doing good

SERMON XXXI.

CAST THY BURDEN ON THE LORD.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."—Ps. lv. 22.

EVERY man must bear his own burden, and it is a fine thing to see any one trying to do it manfully; carrying his cross bravely, silently, patiently, and in a way which makes you hope that he has taken for his pattern the greatest of all sufferers. It is a fine thing to see a man who is himself in trouble, trying not to be troublesome to those around; putting the best face on his affliction, and anxious not to involve others in it. "Lie down, if you please. Your sitting up won't mitigate my pain, but it will do me good to find that you have enjoyed a night's sound sleep." "Thank you for your offered loan. It is tempting, but it could be only a momentary relief, and it is better that only one, instead of two, should be reduced to poverty."

On most of those whom He loveth, God layeth some burden. He gives them something to carry, and carry *through*, and this burden of the Lord we must not throw down, and run away from it, but we must try how best we can manage it. Like the water-pitchers which Syrian

maidens carry on their heads, like the basket of the Neapolitan grape-gatherer, the load is usually so light, —the task, the responsibility, the light affliction,—that, rightly borne, it only improves the bearer's gait; and as he moves along with free and open port, erect and unstooping, it only gives straightforwardness to his regards, and a measured sedateness to his goings, and the bearer looks the better for his burden. The people whom you choose for your friends are not the frivolous, jaunty spirits, free of thought, free of care, and perpetually frisking; but those profound and earnest natures, who, if not acquainted with grief, are at least acquainted with grave thoughts, and whose benevolence is all the brighter because it comes welling up from depths which the ordinary auger cannot open.

Every man must bear his own burden, and as some loads are rather heavy, it is important that each should understand the art of carrying. And without multiplying rules, there are three hints which it would always be well to follow :—

1. A good road is a great relief to a heavy burden. The same weight which would be insupportable through miry fields or over a broken rocky wilderness, is endurable on the king's highway. The cross which is given you to carry when in the path of duty, will not crush you; but if you quit the way of the commandment—if you go where there are no footsteps of the Forerunner, or try near paths and evasive, you may either slump through the slough and be drowned in perdition, or with the stiff heavy clay adhering to your sandals, you may find a triple toil—

the burden on your back, and the burden at each leaden heel.

2. Whether large or little, if the load be hard, you may save yourself by interposing some soft lining. Many a brow would ache less, many a shoulder would not be so chafed and galled, if between that brow and that burden, if between that shoulder and that yoke, there came the famous pad called Patience. In Norse Tales, and other books of Northern mythology, you continually read about trolls—frightful creatures which come out of crevices in the mountains and stop travellers in their journey; but if one of these spirits of darkness be anyhow hindered from getting back to his den before sunrise, the moment a ray of light reaches him, he splits all in pieces, and a few splinters of flint are all that remain of him. There is a lion in the path; there is a troll in the pass. This long lesson which you, scholar, have got to learn, this disagreeable commission which you, man of business, have got to execute, this very unpleasant place which you, servant, have got to fill, it comes out and growls, a hideous monster, threatening to devour you, and scaring away your happiness. But after all, he is only a troll; he cannot stand sunshine. Turn on him a smiling look, and he is done for,—ugly goblin that he is, give him your brightest, cheeriest look, and not only will he fly all to flints, but perhaps you may espy an angel where the spectre disappeared. Sweetness of spirit, sunshine, is famous for dispelling fears and difficulties; patience is a mighty help to the burden-bearer. To which we just add—

3. The art of packing,—the art of placing and adjusting. You may have met a Swiss mountaineer coming or going from market with so many things on his back, that if it had been proposed to you to carry them you would have been puzzled with the problem how to dispose of them. That pail of milk you might have carried in one hand, and that cheese in another; but what is to be done with this web of linen, and that bunch of onions, and these sprigs of mistletoe, and all that hunting gear? It would need a dozen hands, and not even then, for they are such awkward packages, without holdfast or handle. But on the shelves of his curious perpendicular barrow or carry-all, the clever cowherd arranges them securely, and slings them to his shoulders, and trudges on, with his sustaining Alpine stick in one hand, and nothing at all in the other. Some people live at random. They have no arrangement, no method, no forecast. They rush out into the day, clutching at the work which first occurs, and on the top of that comes something else, and then some other thing utterly unexpected, and which had no right to come at all, and they cannot stand it any longer. "What a bother! you see both my hands are already full. Is thy servant a dog, that he can also fetch and carry with his teeth?"—whereas, dear friend, if you had taken five minutes in the morning to think over and arrange the occupations of the day, if one by one you had placed them on that famous frame called prayer, you could have easily shouldered them, and, as with one hand you leaned upon the staff of the promise, the other hand would have been free for any incidental work which was

given it to do : and like an orderly carrier depositing his parcels as he passes along, as one little turn and one great task after another were finished, as the hours moved on, you would get home in the evening lightly laden at last.

Every man must bear his own burden ; yet, as we saw last Sabbath, it is our duty and privilege to lighten the load of one another; and, what is very remarkable, this is often the best plan for lightening our own. Still it must be confessed that, whether self-entailed or heaped on us by others, there are some burdens which go beyond our own ability, and in bearing which vain is the help of fellow-creatures. It is therefore unspeakably kind and gracious in the Lord that He invites us to communicate such solicitudes and sorrows to Himself, offering to sustain us under them, or rather offering to sustain them in our stead.

A good many summers ago I read in a north-country newspaper :—A gentleman was passing along the side of a field, when a sheep came up so close to him, and bleating so piteously, that his attention was quite arrested. Following to a little distance, he found that a portion of the stone fence had been brought down—most likely by the trespassing sheep themselves leaping over it—in such a way that the ruins held a lamb a fast prisoner. The traveller soon removed the turf and stones, and so little hurt was the young creature, that it at once ran up to its mother, and shook itself as the two went gambolling off together.

"All we like sheep had gone astray," and in leaping

over the fence of God's law had brought it down in ruin on ourselves. The broken commandment is a living grave to the transgressor, a fence which he cannot repair, and an incubus which he cannot heave off. But, moved with compassion, the Son of God came to the rescue. In the greatness of His might not only did He lift off the mountain of guilt—the crushing load of a broken law—but in the greatness of His pity He bound up that which was broken; for in this instance the violation of the law had proved the destruction of the transgressor. When we were without strength Christ died for us, and from the curse of the law delivered us by taking all the curse into His own bosom.

Does any one here find himself overwhelmed by his own misdoings? Have you by your sins and follies brought guilt upon your soul? Do you feel, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me"? Cry to the Lord, for He only can deliver. Whether it be the collective burden of your general sinfulness, or the special load of some great or recent transgression, His mighty arm alone can lift off the mountain-weight from your conscience, and cast it into the midst of the sea. And such a good Shepherd is He, if you throw yourself on His compassion not only will He pardon your iniquity, however great, but He will heal the hurt, the damage, you have done yourself. He will cause you to hear the voice of joy and gladness, so that the bones which sin had broken shall rejoice. And now that you are restored into the paths of righteousness—now that He is saying, "Go and sin no more"—watch against

the temptations which proved too powerful for you, and in love and thankfulness follow your strong Deliverer.

The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit or a troubled conscience who can bear? There are calamities so crushing that the only comforter we can think of is God; and better is the sorrow that sends us to Him than the prosperity which keeps us away. On the other hand, the burden, the care, or calamity which God helps us to carry, will hurt us far less, and will be much more easily borne, than a minor sorrow to which we bring only our own resources, or at best the aid of a fellow-creature. Hence it is wonderful what feats of performance, and still more, what feats of valiant endurance have been exhibited by those faithful witnesses who were tempted and tortured, who were stoned and sawed in sunder, not accepting deliverance; and this not because they were men of adamantine nerve or iron fibre—for they were men of like passions with ourselves,—but because their felt infirmity sent them back on an unseen Helper, and, enduring as seeing Him who is invisible, out of weakness He made them strong. The great thing is to get our minds in harmony with God; for "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Reconciled to Him as revealed in the Gospel, you have entire confidence in all His procedure, because a heartfelt complacency in all His perfections; and with infallible Wisdom pioneering your path, with providential goodness presiding over your destiny, and with fatherly love every moment accessible, why should you make a burden of what is merely

a shadow, and why should you have any real burden and not cast it on the Lord?

"Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hands,
To His sure truth and tender care
Who earth and heaven commands.

Then on the Lord rely;
So safe shalt thou go on;
Fix on His work thy steadfast eye,
So shall thy work be done.

No profit canst thou gain
By self-consuming care;
To Him commend thy cause; His ear
Attends the softest prayer.

What though thou rulest not?
Yet heaven and earth and hell
Proclaim, God sitteth on the throne,
And ruleth all things well!"

Greek mythology fancied that the starry vault was solid and weighty, and to Atlas it assigned the burdensome business of upholding the spheres. And many is the self-elected Atlas amongst us who hastens forward to uphold the shaking heavens—who feels as uneasy and overburdened as if the throne of the Eternal rested on his shoulder, and who groans in anguish as if the firmament might fall or the course of Providence go wrong.

It is quite needless. There is no occasion for any Atlas, as God has arranged the universe. By the mutual attraction which He has put into all worlds, modified by the impulse which His own will has given to each, He has made their very weight an element in the general welfare—a security for the universal stability. No Atlas is

needed to support the spheres, but the sun's attraction is the hand which holds in its place the earth, and which —whatsoever burden Alps and Andes and Himalayas may be to the globe itself—avows that earth's mountains are no burden to the sun.

The believer is no burden to his God, and even if you should be carrying whole mountains of care and solicitude, they don't make yourself more burdensome or your case more difficult to the Creator of the ends of the earth. He fainteth not, neither is weary. The Sun of Righteousness will suffer no kindred spirit to be torn from within the sphere of His attraction: He will not suffer the righteous to be removed.

Such then is the conclusion of the whole matter. There are burdens which are bad and blameworthy, and these it is our duty at once to cast away. Such a burden is the evil conscience, from which the true deliverance is the cross of Christ: such a burden is the easily besetting sin, from which the sanctifying Spirit will set free the vigilant and prayerful Christian. Casting aside these weights, let us run our race. And there are burdens not sinful in themselves, but which, if not managed rightly, may make us a burden to ourselves or to others—some of them "light afflictions," others abundantly heavy. These, whilst thanking the friends who seek to divide them, let us cast on the Lord.

Low spirits or a languid constitution, is that your burden? Well, it is trying. To the spirited captain in the slow-sailing craft it is trying to be overtaken and passed by one swift cutter after another; but it is wonderful

what voyages have been made by skilful navigators in very clumsy concerns, and how much of this world's work has been done by men like Boyle, and Baxter, and William of Orange, who might have found a perpetual apology, as they found a serious obstacle, in their "often infirmities." And even though your spirit should not be bright, if your faith be but steadfast, you will hold on your way, and wax stronger and stronger. Your dejection, your despondency, cast on the Lord, and it may please Him to send you the Comforter to abide with you. The Spirit of Holiness is the Spirit of Happiness, and the more that He fills you with the Gospel the fuller will you be of peace in believing.

Is poverty your burden? "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." He had no need to cry to man, for the Lord was nearer; and even if man had heard, it would not have been much he would have done. He might have *helped* a little, but the Lord *saved.* He might have taken out of one difficulty, but the Lord delivered him from "all his troubles." So, taste and see that God is good. He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He can so bless a scanty provision that its possessor shall be satisfied with bread, and can impart such wealth to penury, that the poor disciple shall make many rich.

Bereavement—a sorrow past or prospective—is it this which weighs you down? Wonderful is it what God can make one being to another, and therefore woful is the blank when such a presence disappears. But just as the

clouds of amber or amethyst in the evening sky attract our gaze, and carry our imaginations onward across sun-gilt waters to balmy islands where it is still high day, so in the calm peaceful exit of a believing friend or parent, after the first burst of anguish has rained itself out, our thoughts are carried gently forward to that land where their sun never sets, and where in Christ the death-divided meet to part no more. And so in love and wisdom through these most painful partings, a loosening, attracting process is carried on, making it perhaps a little easier to quit the earth, and most assuredly investing with new desirableness the Father's House.

"No, you have not named it," does any one reply?—"The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and I know my own burden. It is neither pain nor poverty, nor the loss of friends; but why should I speak of it? Some would not understand it, and no human hand can help me with it." So be it. If man were sufficient for man, there would be no need for religion. If there were no evils from which man could not rescue his brother, there would be no need for a Saviour; if no sorrows under which man could not sustain his fellow-man, there would be no need for a Divine Comforter. But it is a grief, a care like yours, which makes religion a reality. Carry it to the Throne of Grace, and see if there you do not find mercy to pardon and grace to help in time of need. However difficult to describe, there is there One who can understand it; however remote from the range of ordinary sympathy, there is there a merciful High Priest who can enter into it; and

however far beyond the reach of human help, there is there a Wonderful Counsellor who can either extricate from it or convert it into your higher good.

"So with my God I leave my cause,
From Him I seek relief;
To Him in confidence of prayer
Unbosom all my grief."

SERMON XXXII.

THE TRUE WORD IN THE RIGHT TONE.

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."
JOHN VI. 63.

ALL truth is precious, and the most important truths are those which bear on the highest themes. Of such truths the great repository is Holy Writ, and we are unspeakably beholden to the men who, by searching the Scriptures, find out their treasures, and make them more widely available. We are indebted to the deep-sea diver, who fathoms the places hard to be understood, and who, opening some dark saying, brings to view a pearl of great price. We are indebted to the skilful lapidary who, familiar with facets and angles of cleavage, removes from some stone that earthy dulness which it has contracted in our coarse handling, and by setting it in a proper light, makes it flash with tinted glory, like a lamp in a rainbow, like a sun encaged in a fountain. We are indebted to the interpreter who has enucleated the meaning of a mysterious passage; still more indebted to the theologian who has given due prominence to a doctrine overlooked or undervalued, and not only secured it in a shrine where

henceforward it may be safe from desecration, but placed it on a pedestal where, as it sheds light on lesser truths, it may withal arrest the most cursory beholder.

But "the truth as it is in Jesus" consists of something more than doctrinal propositions, nor can any number of dogmas embody the whole of Scriptural divinity.

You take up the Elements of Euclid, and as you proceed from statement to statement you feel that it all is true. Everything which is here advanced respecting the properties of triangles, and squares, and circles, is so correct, that the moment you understand the proof—indeed, often before you peruse the proof, the moment you understand the theorem—there is an end of the matter: that statement stands fast, that conclusion is irresistible, and is established for ever.

But you never think of the "spirit" of Euclid. Was he grave? was he playful? was he morose or kind-hearted? was he a good man or a bad?—a favourite with his friends, or a misanthrope? And so, when you take up a volume of chronology, or the Transactions of a learned Society, you don't disturb yourself as to the temper or disposition of the authors. Historic dates, mathematical propositions, scientific observations, are quite irrespective of the heart and soul of the writer. However good and loveable he may have been, it does not come out in his work; and however true are his sayings, they are truths of the driest description, dry annals, dry demonstrations, dry records of phenomena. A copying machine, a calculating engine, a photographic apparatus, could have done the most of it, could have registered these solar spots,

could have worked these logarithms, could have transcribed these dates as well as a man of heart and soul; and indeed in such a case a chief effort of the will is to keep out the heart and soul, and prevent them from disturbing the intellectual processes.

How different when you take up "Thoughts" by Pascal or John Foster, a History like Macaulay's, a poem like "The Task!" Here, too, you have got a book, but not a book made by machinery. It is a book with a man inside of it—the living man—the whole man, heart, soul, and strength and mind. And although you may take out the *truths* he tells, although you may write a chronological abstract of the history, although you may make a memorandum of the keen intuitions or subtle inductions of the sage, although you may string on your rosary the maxims of the bard, you know that over and above these truths you have encountered something more—the man of like passions with yourself, in whom these truths lived and moved and had a being; and the author in his living entireness, the hearty historian, the playful poet, the keen and caustic moralist, have exerted on your consenting mind an influence which truth by itself never can produce.

Where a moral or spiritual result is to be wrought, they are not the doctrines merely which the author lays down, but very influential, heart upon heart, is *the tone of mind*, the turn *or disposition of the teacher.* And in considering any doctrine, in trying to ascertain its precise extent and import, it is of much moment to ascertain, if we can, the spirit in which it was originally spoken or written.

"The words which I speak unto you," said the Lord

Jesus, "they are spirit, and they are life." They are not mere oracles. They are the utterance of One who is the Life as well as the Truth. And in order to be in communion with the Speaker, it is not enough to catch mere formal propositions, you must be so far in unison as to comprehend His feeling, and for the moment share it. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Life comes to souls, not through the "flesh" of definitions and dogmas, but from the living God who in living words enters the heart-sanctuary, and who from the time He takes up His habitation there, makes it a living temple. The "spirit," then, of Christ's speaking, and so far of all Scripture, in which the living Word of God is the true speaker—in the Psalms the chief minstrel, in the Proverbs the chief moralist, in the Prophecies the true seer, in the Narratives the true historiographer,—the spirit of Scripture, what is it, as distinguished from the doctrines it reveals and the truths it defines?

It is a *godly* spirit. As has been remarked of England's great favourite, "His genius was wide as the world, yet not in any sense above the world." "His men are passionate and strong; his women are beautiful with a loveliness that scarcely ever reminds us of heaven: he has 'neither raised the mortal to the skies,' nor 'brought the angel down,' and notwithstanding his Scriptural parallels and moralities manifold, there is scarcely any Christian poet from whom the thirst for the supernatural is so remarkably absent."[1] What is the lack in so many books of man's making is the glory of the Bible. In it God is

[1] *Spectator*, April 7; *Christian Spectator*, June 1864.

everywhere, and God is all in all. And although the remote and awful reverence of Amos and Ezekiel at last gives place to the filial nearness and affection into which Jesus introduced His disciples, never throughout the Book do we lose sight of the all-pervading presence and all-controlling supremacy of the King immortal, and in alternate outbursts of goodness and majesty,—"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble," hope is encouraged and presumption is checked, whilst with all their condescension to our finite capacity the Divine perfections make no concession to our sinful wishes, or to that wayward propensity of fallen humanity which is evermore feigning a god like unto itself.

Still, like the Spirit of Jesus, the spirit of the Bible is a *kindly* spirit. Not aloof and arrogant,—not lecturing, not reprimanding,—the Scriptural tone is sympathetic, considerate, encouraging. We cannot call the Bible a "genial" book, for the books commonly so called accept man as he is, and leave him very much as they find him, whereas the Bible avows that man is wrong and wretched, and seeks to make him better: hence its pity is sublime, its sympathy, if that of a kindred heart, is still the sympathy of perfect goodness and stainless purity. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you." "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The Bible spirit is a *serious* spirit. There are some gay

and sprightly writers whom we enjoy for the moment, and who perhaps leave in our minds a small residuum of knowledge or instruction; but in dealing with the highest matters, in questions of life and death, jesting would not be convenient, and there is small room for even irony. And such is the view which the Bible takes of man's depravity, so terrible are the calamities which sin is still to bring upon the earth, and so fearful are the prospects of the sinner who dies unchanged, that we cannot wonder that the tone of Inspiration is usually grave and solemn. Predictions like the Rise of Antichrist, the Apostasy, or world's falling away from God, the Battle of Armageddon, and the great woes which are yet to overtake the great wickedness,—such predictions are naturally set to mournful music, just as the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness in accents firm and unmistakeable.

Yet a *hopeful* spirit; even where the sky is overcast, the air is warm, because above the clouds the sun is shining; and in the quarter from which the upper current sets in the horizon is clear. Even where great and precious promises are not actually spoken, the glow of the Gospel is felt; and beyond the murky battle-cloud of man's crimes and conflicts the sun of millennial glory keeps shining. If with our world the worst is not over yet, the best is also coming; and though sin has had a long and disastrous reign, grace shall also reign unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, grave and serious as it is, the Bible is also a sustaining book, and has done more to keep up the heart and inspire the effort of good men than all other books together.

Finally, the Bible spirit is a *holy* spirit. Full of God, it is full of goodness. Need we say how everlasting rectitude runs through its precepts and reproofs? how the beauties of holiness blossom up from every page, and how its very air is sanctity? If it were not such a holy book, would not bad men like it better? And if there were in it less of the living God, are there not many to whom in virtue of its other charms it would prove a more attractive volume?

The words which Jesus speaks are spoken in a spirit heavenly, gracious, earnest, encouraging, and hence their hallowing effect. Not only is it the truth He speaks, but the spirit in which He speaks it—a spirit loving, compassionate, faithful to the souls of men and loyal to the Lord of All. And it is not to the mere momentousness of their announcements, the mere intrinsic weight of their sayings, vast as these are, that they owe their amazing power; for stronger than any separate truth, there is in them the True One Himself; and if we can catch and repeat them as spoken by Him, there won't be what there too often is when uttered by us—the kind word coldly spoken, the tender, solemn warning harshly spoken, the most gracious thing in all the world, God's Gospel, gruffly spoken.

If so, it is the wisdom of those who desire strong consolation to get as much as possible into contact with the living Christ. "The flesh profiteth nothing," and it often happens that ministers and books, and systems of divinity, if they do not lead the inquirer in the wrong direction, do not conduct him far enough; and you are not far enough till, so to speak, you are within sight and hearing of the

Saviour Himself—till you are near enough to see the kindness in His countenance, and to perceive the grace which is poured into His lips—till you are near enough to descry that God's beloved Son is truly the seeker of lost souls, so that you can intrust Him with your own—till you are near enough to catch that voice, which, with gentle but immortal cadence, fills our dispensation, and which as it enters your spirit publishing peace, in the joy of pardon drowns the love of sin.

Those who are called to teach Christianity should try to do it as nearly as possible in the Master's spirit. So taught, it does not consist of mere articles or propositions. In order to get a creed at all complete, we do not look at the letters painted on the wall or printed in the book, but we look to the Lord Jesus. When we want to say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty," we can hardly pause to pronounce it till Jesus shows plainly that God indeed is a Father; and so when we want to believe in the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the body, in the life everlasting, we have to look to Him in whom pardon and life are impersonate. And so with every doctrine in divinity. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and truth as spoken by Him was "truth in love;" and to try to separate Christ's doctrine from Christ's life and Christ's spirit, is to give us a rose without the scent, a rainbow without the colour, an anthem without the music, a summer without the sun. It is to offer a stone to those who ask for bread—it is to exhibit fossil ferns and a piece of petrified timber to those who would fain be conducted to the Tree of Life and the pastures green. God's Sove-

reignty, as inquirers have sometimes viewed it, and as a cold theology has sometimes showed it, is very formidable, for, dissevered from the living God, a mere attribute may add to the blindness of caprice the fixity of fate; but as viewed by the Lord Jesus, it was a joyful thought that the helm was in hands so wise and holy, and, lifting His eyes to the Father's Throne, He rejoiced in spirit, and said, "Father, I thank Thee." Predestination, as men have sometimes taken it, is a bar to the Fountain opened, rendering access doubly difficult, and reducing the number of the saved; predestination, as the Saviour put it, is a palisade around the sheepfold, barring nothing out except the roaring lion, and insuring the safety of all who are once within: "To my sheep I give eternal life; neither shall any pluck them out of my Father's hand." And in unison with representations so bright and worthy, those doctrines of God's Sovereignty and electing grace, which are so often mere *tenets* in men's systems, but which, in the theology of Jesus, were *living truths*, awaken the rapture of like-minded apostles as they exclaim, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Truth is a rock, and on that rock faith plants its foot, and feels secure. But even on the rock you cannot live long without an atmosphere, and the believer's atmos-

phere is love. That atmosphere is viewless, invisible, often forgotten; still it is real, and it is vital. "The words that I speak are spirit," says the Saviour. Over and above the resting-place which weary spirits have found at His feet, which guilty consciences have found in His arms, there is an afflatus gone forth from those words of His, which to inhale and be surrounded with is like entering heaven's vestibule. You may have felt an influence from a fellow-creature's words, and as you read the manly sense and wholesome energy of Walter Scott, the grand enthusiasm of Chalmers, the sublime regards of Niebuhr, the sunny suffusion of Richter, there was for the moment a spell upon your spirit, an induction or transference from that other mind into your own; and even without being able to recall facts or sayings, you had still derived a benefit, a spiritual or moral benefit, over and above any specific addition to your intellectual knowledge. And so communing with Christ—living in His society and listening to His words, as far as the fixed and prayerful perusal of Scripture enables you to do—His words will abide in you. They will, according to your need, exert an influence tonic or soothing—cheering your sadness, reviving your languor, reproving your earthliness, correcting your morbidness, animating your faith and hope, and, in a fuller development of heaven-born powers and tendencies, helping forward your sanctification.

See here, if not the basis of ecclesiastical union, *the secret of Christian Communion.* The words which I speak unto you, says Jesus, are spirit, and they are life; and the man who has affinity for these words, is so far one spirit

with Christ—he is a Christian; and I should not like to exclude from communion with myself the man who is in communion with my Lord. Looking back to the fathers of the early Church, and looking in on neighbour Christians of the present day, one may observe a great lack of clear and consistent ideas, and may find important truths mixed with astounding errors. Yet after all, if it is to be by their fruits that we know them, if the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, goodness, meekness, temperance; if love to Christ constitute true discipleship, we must accept them as brethren; and if any challenge your fraternization with such, your apology must be, "If we are not exactly of one symbol, we are at least of one heart and one soul. If there is a sentence in the creed which we cannot say together, there is nothing in Christ which we would wish to be different, and heresies of the heart are quite as dangerous, and to me as estranging, as errors in the head. You yourself would allow that verbal soundness is a poor substitute for vital godliness, and although you call him heterodox, I do not find him heteropneustic."

SERMON XXXIII.

COME AND SEE.

"Philip saith unto him, Come and see."—JOHN I. 46.

NATHANAEL, the guileless Israelite, was one of those who looked for Redemption, and whose mind had been exercised with meditation about that Son of God and King of Israel who was just then the desire of his nation. And it was his happiness to have a friend who shared his piety and his wistfulness. When Philip found Jesus, he immediately thought of that comrade to whom the discovery would be tidings of great joy; and so he findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, "We have found Him! Him of whom Moses and the Prophets foretold!" But when he came out with the name, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,"—whether he knew Joseph or not, Nathanael knew something of Nazareth, and with a feeling as if the thing were impossible, he exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of that place?" Philip did not argue the point. He quoted no text, he adduced no analogous instance; he did not reason or remonstrate with his friend; but like a plain straightforward man, sure of his point, he invited his friend to accompany him and judge for himself.

That appeal to sense or consciousness is the primary logic, and it should be the most conclusive. It is the way in which, if he won't believe your assertion, you convince your little child. "The fire burns. The honey is sweet. There is a rainbow in the sky." And if he still demurs, you fall back on the *experimentum crucis:* "Take it into your own hands. Satisfy yourself. Touch and see. Taste and see. Come and see."

Of this appeal to experimental evidence we have a great deal in the Bible. "O taste and see that God is good;" or, as it is expanded in the "New Version of the Psalms:"—

> "O *make but trial* of His love,
> *Experience* will decide
> How blest they are, and only they,
> Who in His truth confide."

And it is an appeal which the Lord Jesus was constantly using in the days of His sojourn. Not that He did not appeal to Moses and the Prophets, but He appealed to His hearers as well. He challenged their own consciousness. "Make but the trial," for to what else did it amount? When He said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" "Come unto me, and I will give you rest,"—what else was it but an appeal to their personal experience? "Come unto me, and see if you do not find rest to your souls. Come unto me, and see if you do not get another sort of life than you have ever known before."

"Come and see." The severest of tests both for persons and systems. "Come and see how a Christian can die," said the dying sage to his pupil; but how would it do to say, "Come and see how an infidel can die?" How

would it have done for Voltaire to say this, who, in his panic at the prospect of eternity, offered his physician half his fortune for six weeks more of life? How would it have done for that English atheist and voluptuary, whose last words were,—"Until this moment I believed that there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel that there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty."

"Come and see." It is hardly in our power to do as Nathanael did, or as Andrew and his companion did the day before, when, in answer to the inquiry, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" Jesus Himself replied, "Come and see," and they tarried with Him that afternoon and night, and were thenceforward His devoted disciples. But we can do what is equivalent. From the ample materials preserved to us we can place before the mind's eye Jesus of Nazareth, and if we look to right purpose I think we shall see—

I. The fairest of all men.

II. The beloved Son of the Father.

III. The Saviour of sinners.

I. Come and see the fairest of all men. We have never yet seen a man as great and as good as he might have been; and in order to form an idea of perfect excellence, we need to bring together traits and features from many originals. But when from one we have borrowed his elevation and magnanimity; from another, his sweetness and affability; from a third his tender sympathy, open to every sorrow, and not disdainful of any joy; when in one we have selected his disinterestedness in choosing out the noblest object, and his steadfastness in pursuing it through peril, hardship, and poverty, his self-devotement

for family, or friends, or fatherland; in another, his serenity and self-mastery in the midst of extremest misery; in another his unflinching courage and uprightness; in yet another, his delicacy in healing wounded feeling, his divine dexterity in sparing needless pain; when from another still we have detached his deep devotion, making life a walk with God, and bringing Heaven into the homeliest scene; and when we put all these lineaments together, is there any image that rises to the mind but One only—the image of Him in whom every attribute of excellence was embodied, and in whom humanity was ennobled—the Man Supreme,—Jesus of Nazareth? Come and see.

I have heard of a tourist who in a city of many sights was so arrested by one picture, that he did not care to look out for any others. Day by day for two months together he returned to the gallery, and sat spell-bound before the wonderful vision, drinking in the soul and the beauty, and his eyes sometimes tingling towards a tear as a new thought came floating up to the surface: and when the last day arrived, and his luggage was packed and the horses were ready for the road, he ran back to have another glimpse of what was henceforward to be "a part of sight,"—an element and influence in all his seeing.

It was a sight something like this which had arrested Philip, and which he invited Nathanael to come and share. True, he was yet to see "greater things;" but he had already looked upon that countenance whose loveliness no evil emotion had ever for a moment darkened, that majestic brow which was the home of none other but holy thoughts and noble purposes, and which as yet was marred by no

thorny crown; he had listened to His gracious words; he had observed His mien, with its awful yet engaging dignity; he had felt the heavenly atmosphere in which He moved, and had been conscious of that grace and truth which, speaking or silent, went forth from Him as goes its radiance from the sun; and what He could neither describe nor withstand He wished Nathanael to come and see.

The world cannot bear the books that have been written; but, whilst you run and read, there is one all unique and severed. Before that golden frame through which the Man Christ Jesus looks forth upon us, have you stood gazing till in its light you learned after a new fashion to love your fellow-men—that race ("Behold the *Man!*") of which He is one? gazing till in alternations swift and strange, there tumultuated through your bosom despair and hope—despair of the faintest resemblance here—hope of a close resemblance by and by? Before that Gospel narrative have you knelt, and mused, and wept—wept when gazing again at this portrait you thought,—"And he is a kinsman of mine. This is my brother;" knelt when again the glory prevailed, and you were forced to cry, "My Lord and my God!" "Too near to such a sinner, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

II. Come and see the beloved Son of the Father. The Man separated from sin, the Man Supreme, is a true but utterly imperfect description of Jesus Christ. In His own consciousness He was all this, but He was also a great deal more. He desired to connect Himself closely with Apostles and others around Him. "It is I, be not afraid. Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have. Henceforth I call you not servants,

but friends." And yet, though they were mortal feet on which Mary poured the spikenard, though they were true tears He shed on the grave of Lazarus, though the blood which besprinkled the Cross of Calvary was the very same which from Adam onward has flowed through this human heart, and is flowing still, though it was a true body which was consigned to Joseph's sepulchre, though very Man, assuredly He was conscious of being also something else and something greater. Anxious as He was to identify Himself with the world in which He sojourned, and with the race that He had joined, there was a relationship of which He was still more deeply conscious, and a world where He was far more truly at home. Of all His utterances none seemed more spontaneous or natural than His mode of referring to the Most High. "Father, I thank Thee;" "Father, forgive them;" "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit;" "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" "I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman." And although many names and titles were given Him by man, none seemed so appropriate as that which came from the excellent glory,—"This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him."

Come and see that glory, as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Come and see those coruscations of power and majesty, in which from time to time rays of the Shechinah shot forth, beams of the indwelling Deity. Come and hear from the lips in which guile was never found—come and hear utterances so solemn, claims so awful and august as these:—"I am the Resurrection and the Life: I and my Father are one. He

that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" and then say if apostles are not right when they speak of Him as the express image of the Father, and when they say, "Great is the mystery of godliness—God manifest in flesh."

III. Very God and very man,—come, see in Him the Saviour of sinners. Along with a mysterious greatness, there was constantly gleaming forth a consciousness of some very special and pre-eminent errand. United with "the inward sense of relation to God, there was a conviction of the strict individuality, the solitary grandeur of His mission."[1] "I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am come that men may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Like Philip, let us go and see, and the first impression might be that His errand would be accomplished by the truths He told and the example He set. So much which uninspired sages had never guessed, and which even Old Testament inspiration had never revealed, to have it authoritatively and conclusively enunciated was a great thing and a helpful. The fatherliness of God, the pardon of sin, the efficacy of prayer, the immortality of the soul,—to have these things so brought to light, that if the Teacher is at all believable, there can be no more debate nor doubt regarding them. This is a great thing. And if He had done no more than make these truths so positive and palpable, that henceforward every earnest spirit might grasp and keep them, a service so signal would have left His name outstanding and alone amongst the instructors of mankind. Much more, when to the absolute weight of the lesson we add the inward dignity of the Teacher,

[1] Young's *Christ of History*, p. 213.

and think of Him as God manifest, God dwelling amongst us, God walking in the midst of men, God speaking words Divine through human lips, doing deeds Divine with a human hand, and letting love Divine throb through a human heart. But simultaneous with this, it was ever coming forth, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till once it be accomplished! The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Come and see.

For at last it came, that hour so awful, when it was to be Now or Never with a world's salvation—that hour when, on the head of the second Adam, came the sin of the first—nay, when on the head of the only righteous One, the Lord made to meet the sins of us all, and beneath the first feeling of the burden His soul grew sorrowful even unto death. It was not merely that the prophet sealed His testimony with His blood, but the Priest became a Victim, and, in order to earn His crown, the King of Saints became the King of Martyrs. He laid down His life for the sheep, He made His soul an offering, and to the types and shadows of a thousand years gave significance, and to every troubled conscience strong consolation, by shedding that blood, without which there could have been no remission, but which, now that it is shed, insures a cleansing from all and any sin. Come and see Him—see Him in our place, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities—see Him drinking our cup and paying our penalty—see Him in the death-grapple with our enemies, vanquishing the devil, but apparently carried captive by the grave—see Him disarming even this grim enemy, and ascending

most glorious on high—see Him there, a Priest upon His throne, dispensing the dearly-purchased pardons, the repentance and remission—see Him still the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and hark, how with a loud voice they say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!"

My hearers, if there be those among you who have not yet adverted to the claims of Christ, suffer me to say that yours is a very sinful and heartless apathy. He has sent you word that He is willing to save you—that it was just for such as you that He died—and that it is just such as you who He desires should exchange the devil's drudgery for His friendship and service. Do you ask, What sort of service is that, and what sort of friend is Christ Jesus? The answer is, Come and see. The effort of this evening, the effort of every Gospel sermon, is just to let you see. But you do not look. You have a way of turning your eyes in that direction, and yet so holding them that you shall not see. And oh! it is hard to rouse or arrest you, for, just as in the days of His sojourn He came without observation, as Nathanael under the fig-tree was not roused from his reverie by clarions and cymbals—as when he obeyed Philip's invitation and went out to see, he met no stately pageant, no outward pomp, no monarch closing the procession in purple and gold,—so now the Son of God, your Saviour and your King, comes very plainly, very quietly. On the Lord's day you do not hear behind you a great voice as of a trumpet, thrilling every fibre and overmastering every faculty; in the sanctuary or the

secret chamber there does not shine about you a light beyond the sun, with the announcement, "I am Jesus," penetrating your inmost sense. But that Saviour, who has never yet been far from you, who has accompanied all your story, who has seen all your sinning, who knows all your mind, and knows how bad it is, how empty, vain, and evil, in still small voices and kind messages that Saviour keeps saying, "Sinner, let me save thee. My son, give me thine heart; guilty and heavy-laden one, come unto me."

And will you not? Before "the harvest is past, and the summer is" utterly "ended," will you not consent to be saved? Will you not break with all abominations and all idols, and body, soul, and spirit devote yourself to that pure and holy service? Will you not now give yourself to Him who now waits to be gracious, and who has every claim on your admiring affection as the lover of souls, the beloved of the Father, and the altogether lovely among the sons of men.

There is one sight of Jesus which will come to all, but to many will come too late:—

"Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of His train.

Every eye shall then behold Him,
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at nought and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
Deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see."

Perhaps the most fearful view we get of sin's malignity is this, that grace abounding leads so many first to neglect

the means of mercy, and so converts what should be the welcomest sight in all the world into a sight most terrible. "They also that pierced Him shall wail because of Him." And is He not pierced by those who turn into an opportunity of prolonged sinning that reprieve, that span of probation which He has purchased for them? Is He not pierced by those who make it the quietus to their conscience—their pretext and apology for continued carelessness, and for going on in their trespasses, "But God is merciful, and Christ has died"?

But, my beloved hearers, those of you who have resorted to that Saviour's grace for sin's forgiveness, and who into His presence have learned to flee for protection from its power—you who in whatsoever darkness and weakness are trying to follow Him, you will be glad when faith is exchanged for sight. "Blessed is he who hath not seen, and yet hath believed." But the dim days of faith without sight shall not last for ever. To you also shall the invitation be addressed, not in familiar and neighbourly accents, as when Philip accosted Nathanael, but by the voice of the archangel, and by the trump of God, "Come and see." And as from the short and dreamless slumber you open your eyes on the great sight—as with mingled joy and awe you find yourself caught up to meet Him in the air, your whole nature springing up into sudden grandeur and a strange unearthliness—"caught up," I cannot tell what like He then shall be, nor can I tell what like *you* shall be, for, seeing Him as He is, you shall not be so like your present self as you shall be like Him.

SERMON XXXIV.

VERILY, VERILY.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."—JOHN v. 24.

A MIND of wonderful dignity, a mind of amazing vastitude, a mind of unprecedented variety and richness, was the mind of the Lord Jesus. Themes as transcendent as the Divine decrees and the prospects of the universe were familiar to His thoughts, and His spirit's homestead, its dear resort and nightly resting-place, was the Father's presence; but His eye was arrested and His interest called forth by a sparrow alighting, a shepherd counting his sheep, a woman in rapture at finding her lost piece of money. And with whatsoever objects that mind came in contact, in His hand they ceased to be trivial; from the moment He touched them, a kingly mark was on them, a new glory beamed around them. Ever since He said, "Consider them," the lilies have taught a new lesson, and in their sweet unconsciousness have grown more beautiful. Ever since He said, "Of such is the kingdom," the little children have acquired a new significance, an affecting

sacredness. Ever since the daughters of Jerusalem ministered to Him, and in tears followed Him to Calvary, she who used to be the toil-worn drudge or the glittering slave has become the angel of earthly life, the creator and guardian of that new thing in the earth—the Christian Home. And just as His own nobilitating nature lifted up and left on high every object to which it stooped, so every occasion which called forth an utterance revealed His intrinsic majesty and exhaustless opulence. You know how different with ourselves it often is: how readily from high themes we tumble down to a sordid level, how rarely high themes evoke from us high thinking or grand feeling. But if in ourselves we are forced to confess a certain paltriness or poverty, in the mind of Christ we cannot but own habitual loftiness and redundant power. The minutest circumstance—the payment of a tax, the arranging of a company at table, a sunset, the filling of a pitcher at the fountain—would draw forth the abundance of that great heart; and in the simplest of words spoken in the audience of the plainest of people you will find that of these most ordinary of incidents He has taken advantage to give forth utterances which are now enshrined as oracles. It was not that He preached; it was not that He spiritualized; it was not that He petrified daily life and made it prim with pedantic exhortations and formal improvements of every occurrence: but that He was everywhere Himself, everywhere the Light of the world, everywhere the Holy One of God. Where there are no wings, a leap from Spurn Head or the loftiest cliff would end in the ocean. But where there is the mounting faculty, a tree or

a tombstone will make a sufficient starting-point for the firmament. And when there is no oil in the lamp, the opening of the lantern, the turning-on of the bull's eye, will reveal nothing; but if the *sun* be behind the cloud, any crack in the stratum, any crevice will let forth a plenteous illumination. To the mind of Immanuel, so sublime and so soaring, the difficulty must have been to alight; but at any moment and from any scene He could rise till earthly gaze lost Him; and at a wedding feast He could manifest such glory that susceptible spirits felt, "'Tis He. 'Tis the Desire of all nations. Now at last God dwells with man."

There are moods of feeling, however, in which, beyond the sublimity of the Saviour's mind, and the wide range of His sympathies, we value the authority and conclusiveness of His teaching. Even in regard to matters of speculation, and where no great mischief can result from uncertainty, we have often the discontent to which a mighty muser gives expression:—"The great want of conclusive writing and speaking. How seldom at the end of the paragraph or discourse do we feel that something is settled and done! We are not compelled to say, 'Yes, it is so! it must be so! that is decided to all eternity.'"[1] Much more in matters of personal concernment is there a longing for information, full, and fixed, and final; and blessed be God! we have it in the Bible, and more especially in Him who is the Bible's core and nucleus, its key-stone and its corner, the chief musician of its psalms, and the spirit of its prophecy, the sun of all its

[1] Foster's *Life*, i. 177.

claiming, and the teacher of all its lessons, God's exponent, and our entire theology—Christ Jesus.

For five Sabbaths we dilated on as many "faithful sayings," and I hope we found them comforting and quickening. But like everything else in the Word of God, they derive their solidity and their sureness from ultimately resting on the Faithful Saviour; and to many persons He Himself in His acts and utterances is the Oracle Supreme. As you hope, without ingratitude to subordinate teachers, and without setting irreverently aside the other Scriptures, you love to dwell within the Gospels. You like to sit at the Master's own feet, and listen to those words which tell so plainly of the Father. And indeed, though it was only those sayings which are emphasized by the *Nota-Bene*, the double *Verily*, you might compile a brief but comprehensive body of divinity.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

Such sayings, faithful and emphatic, would make a series of subjects on which, however delightful, we have no present purpose to discourse; but we would commend them to the prayerful study of those who in narrow compass would like to obtain, and from the Source of Truth direct, the essence of revealed religion. Here there can be no cavil. At first sight of the surging ocean, a little child takes fright. With its wailing plunge and watery arms, he fancies that the angry monster is rushing up to devour the houses, and the gardens, and the people; and even a nervous newcomer as he lies awake, and finds his chamber rock and quiver in the thundering onset, wishes that it may be all quite right and regular;—and although next morning he sees that it has gone a long way down, and left a broad black belt between the blue waters and green fields, he changes his lodging. He moves farther inland; and though between sleeps next night he hears the booming of the billows and the crash along the cliffs, he feels no panic now, and confidently defies their rage. So a scribe well-instructed, a man acquainted with the Gospel, and familiar with the ebb and flow of opinion, is not disquieted by its coming and going. "Are you not anxious? Are you not afraid of their new attacks, these bold and subtle objections?" "Oh dear no! I am an old inhabitant, and familiar with that sort of thing. It is but the rise of the tide, and will all go down again. But what do you mean in particular?" "Well, I mean this attack on the Bible, this sapping of Inspiration." "Why, my good sir, there is nothing new in that: just the tide. It is German rationalism come up again, and German rationalism

is David Hume come up again, and David Hume is Lord Herbert come up again, and Lord Herbert is Porphyry and Celsus come up again. It must all soon go back to the place whence it came, and leave upon the strand some new chips for the next historian of unbelief to gather." "O no," says another, "it is something far worse. It is that dreadful Development theory. I am so frightened at the notion that after all man is only an ape; and it seems to me a doctrine as new as it is disgusting." "No, my good friend, it may be new to you, but it is an old acquaintance of mine. I assure you it is only the tide, the old troubled sea coming in a little more miry and dirty. It has been often up before. Its present propounder got it from his grandfather, and between the filial and grandfatherly visitation of it, it came up a little swell in the 'Vestiges,' and before that a prodigious spring-tide in French Philosophy, and before Lamarck it came up in Lord Monboddo, and before Monboddo it came up in Lucretius, and before Lucretius in Epicurus with his fortuitous concourse of atoms. We who live down here know all about it, and we look for these ebbs and flows as long as the moon, their author, comes and goes, and as long as historic truth is surrounded by speculation's restless sea. But if you feel uncomfortable, move inland. Don't rest in the doctrines of man. Don't be content with believing only because your parents taught you, and don't be content with books of argument and evidence. There is a region where the streams are glad and where the roar of troubled waters will sound remote and contemptible. God is there, and if you be

there, you need not fear though hills were to shake and mountains to be cast into the midst of the sea. Get you into the Gospel, and sit down at Christ's feet. Learn of Him who offers to teach you; who is too good to mislead, too meek and lowly to repel the most unpromising pupil. If truth and goodness ever met together in this world of ours, it was in Jesus of Nazareth; and if the transition is ever to be made from sin to holiness, and from earth to Heaven, it must be by His disciple."

I am quite aware that there is a darkness which is something else than the absence of light. There is a darkness that may be felt, a darkness caused by volcanic scoriæ,—ashes from the bottomless pit, or the darkness of a mind self-blinded, like that in which the true light shone, and was not comprehended. But if you are really anxious to learn the way of God, He has not left Himself without a Witness, nor you without a Teacher. Go to the recorded Christ and look at that history, listen to those words which survive in the Gospels. And go to the Living Christ, to Him who has said, "I am the Light of the world; if a man follow me, he shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And dim as may be your outset—more of night than morning in your twilight, as you follow on you shall know the Lord, and with the light that radiates from Himself, your path will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

This "Verily, verily," or, as it is in the original, "Amen, amen," this double note of attention and affirmation at the outset of a sentence, is in the Bible peculiar to the Lord Jesus. Indeed, it is only the Evangelist John who

has preserved it in its twofold repetition. It throws an interesting light on that title of the Saviour which occurs in the Apocalypse, "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." And it suggests some instructive thoughts with which we close for the present.

1. The friends of Christ should be the friends of truth. It was not to perpetuate a delusion or to replace one falsehood by another that Christ came, but, as He avowed to Pilate, "I am come to bear witness of the Truth." He had come to tell the truth about God, and the soul, and hereafter; and I may add, He had come to be Himself the very largest addition ever made to the world's stock of truth: He had come to accomplish the great fact of Atonement, and thus "remove those judicial consequences of sin which repel God from the sinner, and those moral obstructions which repel the sinner from God."[1]

To proclaim truth and commence its propagation, and die in its defence, was the benevolent task which the Saviour inaugurated, and the continuation of which He has passed on to apostles, and reformers, and missionaries. And all truth should be dear to the Christian. He is the man who need never fear it, and to whose candid unprejudiced mind it makes its foremost appeal. Pity if that appeal should be ever in vain!

Verily, verily! How important is accuracy! How desirable is it to describe things as we actually see them, and to express our dispositions and wishes as we actually cherish them! Woe to the world because of offences, and of these a most usual origin is rash and unscrupulous

[1] Thornwell, 52.

assertion. And in this way the father of lies, through exaggerated rumours, may persuade England that there are no such ruffians on the face of the earth as our own kindred and co-religionists across the Atlantic, and may persuade the Americans that England is boiling to embrue her hands in the blood of her children, and is only watching to catch the occasion. We know that these things are falsehoods; but perhaps those who assert them partly believe them:—for to the jaundiced eye his neighbour is yellow, and to the eye congested with anger the bloodless sword is gory. To be truthful narrators we must be careful and temperate observers. And this was not the least glory of the gruff moralist, Johnson;—"his friends had perfect reliance on the truth of everything that he told." As a friend has recorded, "One reason why his memory was so particularly exact was his rigid attention to veracity. Being always resolved to relate every fact as it stood, he looked on even the smaller parts of life with minute attention, and remembered such passages as escape cursory observers. From the most trivial to the most solemn occasions his veracity was strict, even to severity." [1]

What a noble thing is genuineness! Verily, verily! "Christ was the Amen—the true, and the trustworthy His doctrine and His life a perfect unison—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

And what a blessedness is yours, to whom Christ is a personal friend—a Saviour known and trusted! He is not only a true Prophet, revealing the will of God for our salvation, but a faithful Promiser: no instance ever

[1] Mrs. Piozzi, in Boswell, vi. 62.

known where any one came to Him and was cast out, where any one clung to Him in felt helplessness and faith, and was cast off. "He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." My friend, do you hear Christ's word? Are you thankful for His teaching? Now that He has removed the barriers, have you come to God as your chiefest joy? Then keep near. Hold fast. Follow on. Hear Christ's word, and believe in the Father that sent Him, till the new life in your soul has driven out all the death, till, faith ripened into experience, you can leave this testimony:—

"Since the dear hour that brought me to Thy foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but Thine,
Nor hoped, but in Thy righteousness Divine.
My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,
Were but the feeble efforts of a child:
Cleansed in Thine own all-purifying blood,
Forgive their evil, and accept their good.
I cast them at Thy feet—my only plea
Is what it was, dependence upon Thee.
While struggling in the vale of tears below,
That never failed, nor shall it fail me now."

COWPER'S *Truth.*

SERMON XXXV.

ON THE DEATH OF LITTLE CHILDREN

"And he said unto his father, My head, my head!"—2 Kings iv. 19.

Up among the mountains you will sometimes come to a deep chasm, and, as you draw near and take a timid glimpse, it looks very dark and terrible. It seems the mouth of some black abyss, the proper haunt of trolls or demons; and yet, if you have courage and are provided with the proper apparatus, on actually exploring it many of its terrors will fly away. Not only does the thyme grow and the bee murmur round its brink, but far within its margin are fairy mosses and rare ferns, and, as the rope is paid out and you are lowered a little further, you begin to come on the carnelian and the agate, perhaps the topaz and beryl. Lighted by your torch, the cavern loses its terrors; the haunt of demons and spectres proves the hiding-place of the gold and the silver.

Up among the Alps you come to such a chasm in the glacier; you look down, and it is cold and grewsome; you listen, and the waters roar and are troubled, and, if you could descend and durst consign yourself to the sub-glacial river, it would be a frightful voyage, or still more

frightful swim in the ice-cold water under the black resounding vault through the heart of that wild and wintry world; and yet a little while and you would see daylight through the tunnel, and yet a little while and you would emerge on the green pastures and sunny slopes of Chamounix or the Grindelwald; and when you came to think of it, you would find that the same element which was grimly frozen in the glacier, and which raged in the turbid torrent, is the very same which spreads out in the lovely mirror of the Leman Lake, and which, with its gleaming sapphire, makes glad the city of Beza and Saussure, and which springs up again in the olives of Ardêche and the vineyards of Vaucluse—the cold and muddy glacier transformed into the glistening oil and sparkling wine.

Over daily life we cannot travel far without coming to that crevice called Pain; the heights of history we cannot climb without coming to those great ice-streams called Sorrow. Personal suffering, domestic desolation, national calamity, meet us everywhere, and although the mighty mystery is too deep to fathom, although the origin of evil is likely to baffle human search for evermore, into some of the cognate questions we can see a little way, and we are thankful for any gleams of light or comfort.

Little children have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, wherefore do they die?—wherefore do they suffer grief and pain? The whole matter is full of mystery. The distribution of disease and poverty, and the other forms of calamity, is so unequal, that we can only account for it by taking refuge in God's righteous sovereignty—that is, by referring it to reasons above our

present cognizance. But why the little children are included—why those whom we fondly call the little innocents—why they pine and sicken, and often writhe in anguish—this is a problem within the problem—a peculiarly dark and distressing feature of the mighty mystery.

It is not the *death* of infants which is so perplexing. Of such is the kingdom, and as from this earth of ours death is the only door to endless life, we have no right to mourn their early exit from a world so evil—their early entrance on a world so bright. But more perplexing than their early departure is their frequent suffering—that *pain* which is so many times their portion—the ailments and discomforts which so often mark their earlier career, making life little better than a dim consciousness of misery. And then the keen assaults of anguish, not unseldom resulting in life-long decrepitude or slow decay, occurring under the government of infinite rectitude and beneficence, it makes us feel there is surely something wrong.

Yes, everything is wrong. We have all got wrong together. The race, as such, has broken away from God, and these little ones, who have done no evil of their own, are sufferers for the ill desert of others. In Adam all died. That first transgression tapped a magazine of woe, a hidden sea of sorrow, and with a deadly exhalation filled the air of earth. The fumes are fatal—there is no escaping from them; a compound of evil, moral and material, they are present everywhere, ubiquitous, all-pervasive. There is no Wardian case proof against their subtle penetration, no bell-glass under which you can place your

olive-plant, your rose, or your lily, and be sure that nothing shall ever harm it. The most guarded nursery is not hermetical against the inroads of sickness, the holiest habitation is not proof against the entrance of bad tempers, bad thoughts, bad passions. Almost as soon as it is born the child begins to suffer; as soon as it is accountable it begins to sin. It is we ourselves, it is humanity, it is the race which has all got wrong, and so those whose fate is involved in ours cannot long continue right.

Thus comes into play the vicarious principle, or the principle of our mutual involvement in one another. The race has ceased to be innocent; the aggregate is guilty, and so the aggregate suffers. In a beleaguered town they are not the warriors alone who endure hardship, and the governing body, but the peaceful and perhaps reluctant citizens feel the pangs of hunger; the schoolboy's excursion to the field or the forest is cut short, and the infant in the cradle, the worshipper in the sanctuary, is blown to pieces by the bursting shell; and so in our revolted, sin-ruined, wrath-beleaguered world, no one is exempt. Fast and thick the missiles fly, and from their sweep the tender babe is not more secure than the aged transgressor. If pain, disease, injury, and death be evils, we know as matter of fact that they overtake those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, in whose mouths no guile has yet been found, and whose hands have done no actual violence.

If, however, they suffer for others' sin, they benefit still more through Another's righteousness. As in Adam all died, so in Christ all are made alive—all who, by their

personal unbelief and sin, do not reject the remedy; so that where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound, and peopling His heavenly kingdom with those who were involved in Adam's guilt, but who are rescued through a Saviour's merits, from the mouth of babes and sucklings Jehovah perfecteth His praise, and, as they sing to Him that loved them, He puts to silence the enemy and the avenger. In themselves helpless and irresponsible, with no power for good or evil, they are on either side an example of that great principle which runs through God's government of this world, that vicarious principle, in virtue of which we are so much involved for better or worse in the well-doing or wickedness of others.

"Bold Infidelity! turn pale and die,
Beneath this stone four infants' ashes lie;
Say, are they lost or saved?
If death 's by *sin*, they sinn'd,—
For they lie here;
If Heaven 's by *works*, in Heaven
They can't appear.
Reason, ah! how depraved;
Revere the Bible's sacred page,
The knot 's untied:
They DIED, for Adam sinned—
They LIVE, for Jesus died."

What eventual benefit these little ones may hereafter derive from their sufferings it is vain to speculate, but I think we can see some benefit which they occasion to others, still on that great vicarious principle of which the Saviour Himself is the crowning illustration, and of which in relation to Him these little ones are the favoured objects.

How it may be in other worlds we know not; but in

this one a most essential ameliorating influence is the effort we make to bear aright our own sufferings, and to mitigate the sufferings of others.

Who are the saintly ones—earth's excellent?

The man of mercies, the man who with the Bible in his hand and the cordial in his scrip, with the love of Jesus in his heart, and with the law of kindness on his lips, repairs to the lonely garret or dark cellar, and gets his spirit softened by the forthputting of a tender sympathy; the man who, returning from the squalid hovel or fireless hearth of hopeless, godless poverty, is almost afraid to touch the dainties resplendent on his board, and drops upon his knees adoring the grace which makes his abode so peaceful and his hope so bright.

Who are the shining ones? They that have been made white and purified?

The son or daughter who ministers to the mind diseased, who tries to cheer the long and melancholy twilight of enfeebled intellect or extinguished hope; or bearing with the exactions and caprices of second childhood, on weak shoulders carries the heavy load, burdensome yet blessed, their venerable years, who in the first and still feebler infancy carried them. The wife who forgetting that it is summer in the earth sits in the shadowy chamber watching out the long long day, even as months ago she watched out the longer night, smoothing pillows which nothing now can soften, and watching symptoms which even fond affection cannot gainsay,—the mother.

Little children,—their ways are very wonderful. Fresh come from God, and the feeling of life not faded, with

existence all so new, what tidings they fetch from the spirit-land, and how near they bring that Father in Heaven whose face it seems as if they were still beholding! The newest visitor and yet the most at home, afraid of nothing, the friend of every one, yes, and their master and their teacher too. A good and clever teacher, making pupils of the stately peer and the sturdy churl, and giving such precious lessons in the form of play, compelling laughter where comedy has failed, and with those capital conductors, those best of tractors, his soft fingers, drawing out the aches from a mother's brow, smoothing the wrinkles on a grandsire's face, and drawing off the perilous stuff which weighs upon a father's brain.

This child is "grown" however,—so grown that he is carried to the harvest-field. A bright morning, and now that the drenching dew is gone back into the sky, it is so charming to gather poppies and pull off their flaming petals; it would be so nice to catch that great fluttering flower, that big purple blossom which always flits away as soon as the toddling little naturalist is ready to tumble over it. But the sun grows hot, and as he lies down near the brushwood a little creature comes out with the brightest of eyes, and a hundred times smaller than his tame gazelle, so gentle and timid that its very movement seems to put out the noise and create a silence for a great way round it, and as they keep watching one another, the winking eyelids close and the little Shunammite is fast asleep. But the sun is hot, and he soon wakes crying. "What's the matter?" "My head, my head!" A fine harvest day, and work must not stop for a crying child. How stupid

it was to bring him out here! Take him home to his mother. She, poor woman, soon sees how ill he is,—the heavy eyes, the moaning starting slumber, the sharp cry as from some darting agony. Will nothing bring back the morning's bloom to those pale contracted features? Will nothing cool that burning brain, or keep up this ebbing strength? Alas, it is too plain that her only one is about to leave her. Into the small clenched hands he has gathered up what remains of the gladness,—her very heartstrings are there, and now with a little smile as of thanks he flies away,—the sunshine of their dwelling flies away. The toys still on the floor and the lifeless form on the mother's knee, but he himself flown away—gone to his Father in Heaven, gone to be the youngest of angels.

And the mother. She thinks of God's prophet, and God thinks in pity of that sorrowing mother, and for once the gates of the spirit-world open earthward as He gives her back her only child.

The sufferings of an infant are sad to see, and it is sad to view the little graves in the cemetery; but if the history of each could be ascertained, to say nothing of the blessed belief that it is now "well with the child," many a time would it prove that the sickness of the child has been the salvation of the parent, and that it was not till He had taken the little one up to His arms that the Saviour Himself was welcomed to the desolate dwelling.

May I venture to say to those who have felt this grief, if bereavement must be, after all is not this the softest form of such sorrow? There may have been anguish at the time, the blighting of many a hope, the burial of

many plans and purposes, but hard as it is for you, you know that it is well with the child. He is one with whom nothing can now go wrong. He will never be ill treated, for he is where there is nothing to hurt or to destroy; and, what is better, he will never do what you yourself have so often done. He will do no evil. He will never shed the bitter tears of repentance, nor mourn over mischief which he cannot mend, and follies which he cannot cure. Favoured little voyager, who reached the happy shore not only without a shipwreck, but without a storm.

And is there not a new reason for loving the Saviour when you think of all the light He has shed on the infant's destiny, and the better things He has provided for this large portion of the human family? "Theirs is the kingdom," so truly theirs, that it is only by being converted and becoming like them that we can enter it. In order to be Christ's disciple you must get from God the Holy Spirit, something of the little child, its simple unquestioning faith, its limpid sense, its single eye, its readiness to rush into the open arms of resistless endearment, and the trustful tranquillity with which amidst all dangers it nestles there. Theirs is the kingdom, and both they and their Saviour invite you to enter. Enter that lower, lesser province the Church on earth, so as to be in the same realm and under the same Sovereign with the Church in Heaven. As the old epitaph says:—

"Weep not, my mother, weep not, I am blest,
But must leave Heaven, if I come to thee;
For I am where the weary are at rest,
And sinners cease from troubling—*Come to me.*"

We do not wonder at Rachel weeping for her children, but the Christian parent must not refuse to be comforted. There is mourning in Rama, and great weeping, but as soon as the weeping is over there remains the strong consolation; and though the chasm is deep, though in human happiness the loss of the little children, or the fear of losing them, makes a frightful fissure, Christ lends us a lamp with which to fathom the gloom, and, as we look in, we find that after all these little graves are so many side-doors in our Valley of Achor, and the nearest entrance to the Father's House. Though the glacial stream called Sorrow is turbid, cold, and gloomy, and though no grief is more poignant than to witness the anguish of an infant sufferer, yet when you come to think of all the tender nursing which its inarticulate appeals call forth—when you think that, in lessening human selfishness, and in sending to their knees those who but for this would scarcely have ever prayed, it is among the most successful of missionaries—when you think of the peaceful fruits which have sprung from this affliction, you will allow that God's doings are all right, even though that river, which makes glad the celestial city, should much of it turn out to be a melted sorrow—the ice that once lay cold on the uplands of life now softly flowing through the midst of the ransomed, and reflecting the Tree of Life from its mild and molten surface.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE FADING LEAF ON THE EVERGREEN TREE.

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever."—ECCLES. I. 4.

MOST of our trees in this country are deciduous. The oak, the lime, the elm, which last summer rose up from the lawn a pyramid of verdure, is now a naked skeleton, and will so continue for the next four months. But in April or May, from every bud a tuft of tender foliage will spring, and each will steadily expand in sun and shower till not a branch is bare—till, looking up through the dense canopy, you cannot see the sky.

But a few of our trees are evergreen. The laurel and the holly do not need to wait for April or May. October did not change their countenance and make them sear and yellow, and here in the depths of December they are as green and glossy as ever. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that their leaf never withers. The leaf of the laurel fades the same as the may, or the mountain-ash; but it so manages that you never notice the change. The outer twigs are bright with new summer, whilst the interior leaves, dry and superseded, are gently pushed off the

stem, and drop down to their peaceful resting-place at the root of the tree.

And it is in this last way that one generation of mortals comes, and another goes. There is no general autumn which sweeps the entire race away, and leaves the surface clear for a second and simultaneous succession, but under covert of the new and rising race the old keeps gradually fading, so that just as your laurel or cypress has never been stripped, and yet you cannot point out a leaf on it which was there three or four seasons back,—one generation goeth, and there is nobody here who was here a hundred years ago; but under covert of the new generation so quietly does it conduct its retreat, that the earth abideth unaltered; life is brisk, the streets are busy, and the great tree of humanity has the same laden boughs, and the same populous hum, as when our infant ancestors revelled beneath the shadow and sipped the honey-dew.

You step into the public stage. It stops a moment to take up a passenger, and by and by it stops to let another down, and though its freight may be changed once and again, it is very gradually, and it still seems full. And so in this great omnibus of existence, as you have kept in your corner for fifty years, although the vehicle is as full and the talk as animated as ever, the original company has for the most part passed away. When you got in at the "Regent Circus;" that old statesman who has just been handed out was a brilliant rising barrister, contemptuous of old age, and rejoicing overmuch in his ardent and abundant youth; and that lady, with something like a crown on her head, whose little grandson has

just been handed in, had not yet become a passenger. As there you have sat watching, you have seen the raven locks turn grey, and the merry urchin, who amused himself by putting on his grandmother's glasses, you have seen fain to put on his own. The tears of bereavement you have often seen in eyes which a little while before were suffused with ecstasy, and mourners who, in the freshness of their anguish, grudged that the separation must be so long, you have known startled by the shortness of the time when the moment for reunion eventually arrived.

For reasons wise and gracious God has so arranged it. This gradual transformation of one age into another—this gentle flux, unit by unit, of the particles which make up any given world, for reasons kind and good so is it ordered. But an incidental effect on our careless non-realizing natures is, that we do not sufficiently note the past—we do not sufficiently prepare for the future.

Rich in patriotic sons and able public servants, it is wonderful how many men of mark England can lose without feeling utter desolation. What, however, makes them men of mark is in many cases the circumstance which, if it enhances gratitude, softens regret—they have fulfilled their mission. And so Whately, the irrefragable logician and acute defender of the Christian faith, Copley, the accomplished orator and sagacious observer of European policy, Colin Campbell, the warm-hearted Highlander and simple, straightforward soldier,—they pass away, and we thank them for their service, and we prize their memory, but we feel that the shock of corn was fully ripe; that

their time of rest had come. And even in the case of younger men, such as India's last Viceroy, there were services as varied and as large as used to fill up the old-fashioned threescore years and ten, and in such a case we feel that early death is hardly premature.

This year has taken from the Church some honoured names amongst the Christian laity of London—names which will be recognised when I mention Joseph East, William Coombs, George Hitchcock. Right nobly did they use their talent, and long will it be before the Missionary Societies, the Colleges, the Orphan-schools, the Young Men's Association, to which they were treasurers and wise counsellors, can forget their work or fill their place. And looking back amongst the year's departed worthies, one name rises up, which, by reason of the cause with which it is connected, inclines me for a few moments to linger. Sir Culling Eardley was a personal friend, and, with his love of art and his love of goodness, a delightful friend; but it was chiefly in connexion with one movement that I used to see him, as you also knew him—a movement for promoting Christian union; and it is as chairman of the Evangelical Alliance that his name will outlast our own generation.

On that subject in other years I used to trouble you, it may be, too often, but the cause still is dear—none the less dear, because, to the promptings of conviction and principle, there is now superadded something of the sacredness of a legacy.

When pleading for it seventeen years ago, we were frequently asked, What is your Alliance to do? We know

what it is to *be;* but what practical aim does it propose to itself? What good end will it answer? At the time we attempted a reply, but we venture to say that the best reply can now be found in its history.

For example, it is no small thing to have displayed to the world a testimony for so much TRUTH. Love is the atmosphere which the Christian breathes, but Truth is the rock on which he stands. And "What is Truth?" That the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired, and are a sufficient rule of faith and conduct; that in the Unity of the Godhead there is a Trinity of Persons; that in consequence of the Fall human nature is utterly depraved; that the Son of God incarnate effected an atonement for sinners of mankind; that the sinner is justified by faith alone; that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convert and sanctify; that the soul is immortal; that the body will rise again; and that at the judgment of the world by the Lord Jesus Christ, the righteous shall go away into eternal blessedness, and the wicked into eternal punishment; that so much at least is revealed truth, and clear beyond all controversy, is the answer of the Evangelical Alliance. Lutherans and Moravians, Arminians and Calvinists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Wesleyans, have together witnessed this good confession, and on the "basis" of these great doctrines standing-room has been found, firm and ample, for more than fifty denominations. This ought to surprise no Protestant, but such a palpable unity of the Reformed is calculated to refute the Romish allegation as to our endless divisions and irreconcilable antagonism, whilst to brethren in Italy

and elsewhere it holds out the promise, that should their new and purified Churches fail to repeat in every particular any existing organization, they will still, if loyal to the Lord, and holding fast the truth as it is in Jesus, be honoured by their fellow-servants, and welcomed into this federation of the faithful.

The Alliance, however, has been eminently successful in promoting its own primary object,—the manifestation and diffusion of BROTHERLY LOVE. This object has been generally undervalued. Many good men have said, "By all means associate for purposes of solid and practical utility; unite to circulate the Word of God, to improve the dwellings of the poor, to reclaim and elevate our sunken masses. But merely to promote friendly feeling and mutual acquaintance between fellow-Christians is an end too vague and shadowy to secure our sympathy. Your Society is founded on a sentiment, and it will accomplish nothing." And so "practical people" are apt to limit their regards to gold, silver, copper, and the other sixty elements which constitute the simple substances of the chemist; for out of these simple substances loaves are manufactured, beef and mutton are built up, sovereigns and sixpences are coined. But those who look a little deeper, lay great stress on powers and agencies which refuse to go into the scales of the chemist, and they are continually thinking of heat and electricity, and magnetism and gravitation, and the vital force. Nor should practical people despise these inconspicuous agencies. Without them there would be no staff of life, no savoury venison, no cattle on our thousand hills, and even the

sixpences and sovereigns would take wings and fly away. To say nothing of that supreme and ultimate Agency which gives to all others their efficacy, we cannot overrate such vital forces as faith and love, nor such a power as prayer. They are "imponderables," but in the moral world they are by far the most potent energies. It is owing to the want of these that missions languish, and that admirable organizations produce inadequate results. It is where these abound that religion revives, the widow and the fatherless are visited, the Lord's treasury is filled, and volunteers in abundance come forward ready for any effort of Christian philanthropy, and intent on seeking and saving that which is lost.

Not only has the Alliance done much to demonstrate the catholicity of the Christian Church, but, by its great convocations and its feasts of charity, it has gone far to bring down from its lofty abstraction, and quicken into a joyful reality, another article of the creed,—"The Communion of Saints." How often have those who love the Lord found their hearts burn within them, as in the society of fellow-disciples they were brought nearer to a risen Redeemer! How often have cold and half-consenting spirits been warmed and melted as the south wind waked, and, in the coming of an unseen comforter, the clime grew soft and balmy! How often has the touching spectacle been witnessed, old faults confessed, or old feuds forgotten, in the moment of a mutual admiration —lifelong friendships commenced and confirmed betwixt ancient adversaries—and the unexpected recognition, with the tearful response to the announcement,

which brings back far distant days, "I am Joseph, your brother!"

The tendencies towards ecclesiastical amalgamation, which are drawing together some denominations hitherto divided, may be in some degree ascribed to the self-same origin. On the floor of the Alliance brethren met, and were surprised to find how intelligent, how high-minded, how lovable their opponents or rivals were; shadows fled away; distrust, dislike, were replaced by that generous affection which strives to make up for former estrangement; and of continued intercourse, the natural consequence has been the inquiry, Is there any barrier of principle in the way of our actual union? Scarcely less valuable is the service which has been rendered where ecclesiastical incorporation is not presently contemplated. An immense addition has been made to the magnanimity and mutual regard of fellow-Protestants of all persuasions, and even although many of the old demarcations should still remain, we have no fear but that "brotherly love" will also "continue."

Amongst the TANGIBLE RESULTS of the mutual interest thus awakened amidst the widely-scattered members of the Christian family, may be mentioned the successful interposition which the Alliance has often made on behalf of suffering brethren abroad. It was to this interposition that the Madiai owed their release from Tuscan dungeons, and Matamoros and his companions their escape from the galleys of Spain. It was to this that the Baptists of Germany owe their exemption from pains and penalties, and that men are allowed to dissent from

the National Church of Sweden without risk of banishment; and no less precious is the intimate acquaintance which Christians throughout the world are now forming with one another. Denominations are no longer so insular, so selfish, as they used to be. We can rejoice in a good harvest, though most of the crop be on a neighbour's fields; we can rejoice in the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom, though it be a comparatively small accession which comes within our immediate precincts.

To be the foremost in such a movement was no small honour; to hold on in heart and hope, as Sir Culling did, was no small merit. Even within these few short years most of his fellow-labourers, the chief fathers of the Union, have fallen on sleep:—Bickersteth and Bunting, Cox and Sherman, Raffles, Leifchild, Wardlaw, and James; Principal Cunningham and Dr. John Brown, Thomas Farmer, Adolph Monod of Paris, Gaussen of Geneva, Baird of America. It is a large fund of loving-kindness which our world has lost in losing them, nor is it easy to replace the men whose lofty worth and endearing goodness made them the attractive centre for any religious union; but we can never forget their pattern, and, as we weave a winter chaplet and hang it on their sepulchre, let us try to catch their spirit and carry out in substance if not in form the object for which they laboured and never fainted.

And thus our generations go, but the race remains; the earth abideth, and so does the human family; the generation departs, but God's purpose goes on. And though the generation departs, it does not dissolve; it

does not go into annihilation; it only goes into new abodes, and incomparably the longest portion of its history is that which it spends elsewhere out of mortal sight, and, in comparison with whose intense experience present joy or sorrow is hardly worthy to be named.

We who have reached the last Sabbath of another year have abundant cause for *gratitude.* Some circles are still unbroken. Round the Christmas hearth of not a few were gathered the dear familiar faces on which the same firelight glinted twelve months ago, and, in order to complete the party, some had to be brought back from distant lands, from dangerous climes, across treacherous seas, or raised up from severe and alarming sickness. Let us praise the Lord for His goodness, for the friends He preserves, for the comforts He provides, for the diseases He heals, for the benefits with which He makes our cup run over.

In the past there is much that needs *pardon.* A general sense of shortcoming and evil, who is there that is not deeply conscious of it?—a frightful amount of wasted time, frequent evasions of duty, the Lord's work performed deceitfully, devotion shammed over, bad tempers, outbreaks of passion, the law of truth imperfectly fulfilled, the law of kindness transgressed continually! Let us now take with us words and return to the Lord; let us expressly and earnestly entreat His forgiveness, and through Christ we may depend on obtaining it. He will take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, and, if with the sad sense of sin, if with the mournful feeling of mismanagement, imperfection, and evil, we leave behind us the past, we shall go up into the future with the sweet

hope of acceptance, and in the joyful recollection, that if we sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Towards that future let us look calmly, cheerfully, trustfully. The Lord is in it, and if we are His we need fear no evil. But no words can be truer than Christ's own,—"In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Our neighbour shall start for the church on the Sabbath morning, and on the way to the earthly sanctuary shall be summoned to the house not made with hands. The judge shall administer justice through the long and laborious day, and when suitors are assembling on the morrow, it shall be announced that he himself has passed on to the Supreme tribunal. The merchant shall quit the Exchange, and, instead of springing nimbly forth on his own threshold, the opened door of his carriage shall disclose his lifeless form. The author shall have lying in his desk a fifth volume of his History, or shall have been exhibiting to a friend the commencement of some new tale, when a mysterious hand paralyses that brain, or breaks the pitcher at the fountain: and whether or not there be the preface of some warning disease, practically it will be to most of us a sudden citation. We shall be in the midst of some great work, when the tools shall drop from our relaxing fingers, and we shall work no more; we shall be planning some mighty project—house, business, society, book—when in one shattering moment all our thoughts shall perish. Life shall seem strong in us, when we shall find that it is done. Oh how happy they to whom all that remains is immortality; happy you whose back-

slidings are healed, and to whom the Lord hath restored the joy of His salvation ; happy you who have lamps, and who keep them trimmed and burning ; happy you who have that confidence in the Saviour, that although nature start at the sudden midnight cry, " The Bridegroom cometh !" the recollectedness of faith shall answer, the moment that we remember who He is, " Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

" Jesus, perfect my trust.
Strengthen the hand of my faith,
Let me feel Thee near when I stand
On the edge of the shore of death :

Feel Thee near when my feet
Are slipping over the brink ;
For it may be, I 'm nearer home,
Nearer now than I think."

SERMON XXXVII.

THE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK.

"And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."—MARK x. 16.

PALMS and some other trees of tropical countries are clever at growing upwards. Their trunks are often hollow cylinders, and the effect of a new season is not so much to add an inch to their diameter as a cubit to their stature. A date is dropped into the soil, and presently there comes up a tuft of fronds, and as the little *Phœnix* keeps growing it pushes farther and farther up into the air this feathery crown, till at last there is a tall slim column with neither branch nor bough, but at the very summit a bright flisking canopy from under which the golden clusters droop downward.

But pines and oaks and elms, and nearly all the trees of England, have another way of growing. The acorn is dibbled into the loam, and by and by come up two tiny leaflets supported on their little stem. They wither in autumn, but after the winter's rest the little nursling takes a new fit of growing, but instead of merely thrusting forth new leaves at the summit, all round and all the way up a new layer of soft pulpy fibre is deposited

under the bark, whilst from the axils or buds branches break out; and so season after season, every summer making the boughs spread wider and the stem wax stronger, the oak holds on expanding, bush and bole together, till a little congregation could worship in its tent, till a house could be built from its timber.

The oak, the apple, the cedar, and most of the trees in our orchards and forests, are exogens or outgrowers, enlarged and strengthened by acquisitions on the external surface, so that if you could only do it deftly enough you might pull off one after another a hundred concentric layers or wooden shells, till you again disclosed the little shrub which left the nursery a hundred years ago.

Now, in the case of the best men, the truest, noblest, greatest,—growth is exogenous. Adding fresh fibres to their strength, and new cubits to their stature, they withal are solid, and keep throughout all that they have ever been. And just as in the heart of that veteran of Windsor Forest remains the sapling which saw George the Third a boy, or was looked upon by Gray and Johnson in their prime, so in the case of the more magnificent natures the true and primal being survives; and whatsoever in the way of knowledge, experience, insight they may have since acquired, at the core of their goodness, and interior to all things else, in the case of men like Wordsworth, Chalmers, Wilberforce, Mackintosh, you will find the little child.

This is the first essential of success with children; you must have retained or through grace recovered this early element—the little child—that freshest youngest form of

yourself on which have been superinduced all others. If through worldliness or pride or misanthropy you have destroyed it, so that your heart is now hollow, you will have no sympathy with children, you will dislike or despise the little ones. And they will soon find it out. The tap of the woodpecker does not more truly reveal the empty trunk than the pat of the little hand or the glance of the little eye detects the hollow heart; and if he draws away from you as from a thing dead and dreary, be sorry for yourself. You may be rich, you may be learned, you may be punctilious in practising the rites of religion: but if you have lost all the good things which the little child gathers in its kingdom of heaven, if the sap and substance of these early springs have vanished and left you dry as summer dust, be sorry for yourself. Scholarship, statesmanship, official station are too dearly purchased by infanticide, by the destruction of that little child who is not only the true father of the man, but who through life would have been his best companion.

No doubt, the grace of God sometimes gives in the new man a precious equivalent: but those are the richest, rarest, most delightful spirits where all that was sweet and simple in life's opening is prolonged into life's progress, and where amid all his thoughtfulness, all his care and sorrow, the veteran keeps the heart of the little child, and has never been cast forth from their communion. Such a one in warm and genial affinity has the main requisite for being "a teacher of babes," and whilst teaching, many will be the lessons which in turn he will learn from them.

In what we say we are thinking of that period when

infancy first opens into consciousness, and the young immortal begins to wake to the world's delight and wonder. It is the period of simplicity, before conscience has come to life, before such compound passions as revenge or envy are developed, when kindness gives content but hardly awakens gratitude, when if in grief there is little hope, there is joined with mirth no trembling, for happiness does not yet cast its shadow fear. It is the time when sensations too are simple, when food and warmth are ample well-being; and perceptions are no less direct and unsophisticated, scarcely aspiring to be ideas; in the rich solution of the sense crystallization not commenced, nor the pulp of feeling compressed and dried into that tough fibre which men call matter of fact.

Can you join them? Can you humble yourself as a little child? Can you look through their eyes? Can you listen through their ears? Can you remember how amidst the soft grass of June you lay upon your back, and gazed up and up for ever so far into the azure, and thought how pleasant it would be to be an angel, and rest on that pure white cloud? Do you remember how you held close to your ear the conch or other winding shell, and wondered why the ghost of the ocean never grew silent? Can you get down to their level?—entering into the mind of their friends, for to them all things are friendly, and they have no mute companions—to them dogs and daisies, kittens and kingcups, all talk distinctly, even books turned upside down have something to say, and empty chairs get lectures if they do not give them. Can you join them?—entering into their thoughts, standing

on tiptoe to look at the transcendental world, half Olympus, half Alhambra, which in crystal and silver and mountains of fruitage spreads upon the table, and which in kingly, queenly forms rims its horizon, and then from the awful vision subsiding to every-day life amongst hassocks and toys on the carpet?

For such little children what is the best thing you can do? By all means protect them. Keep them from harm. Though you intend that at last it should be hardy enough, and face a wintry world, at first you take care of your seedling—take it into your greenhouse perchance, and then when planted finally out, put a fence around it to fend off heedless heels and browsing cattle. So, blessed are those seedlings of eternity which get a good start at first, which open existence where there is no telling of lies, no rough chiding, none of that habitual threatening which begets false and furtive ways. But positively what is the best lesson for the little ones? Surely something very short, a five minutes' task in an hour of play: a something very easy, a sentence of one thought, a sentence of seven words will be quite sufficient —"Love one another," "Our Father who art in heaven," "Suffer the children to come unto Me," "Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me." But quite as much as the instruction, the influence. If milk be the food convenient, *balm* is the congenial atmosphere. Here we see the Saviour surrounded by little children, but we are not told any questions that He asked these infant scholars, nor anything that He bade them repeat, important as is truth: others could do *that;* and it is not so much in

lectures or good lessons that our world is lacking, as in love: even here, and in Christ's own presence, the air was roughened with the east wind of controversy and remonstrance, when from the rebukes of angry Apostles the timid trembling lambs found refuge in the bosom of Jesus, caught up in the arms of the good Shepherd, as He put His hands upon them, and breathed His gentle blessing over them, the calm unspeakable sank into their souls, and with no malice to neutralize it, no unbelief to shut it out, the perfect peace of perfect love had possession of all their minds, and made the moment memorable.

Milk for babes, the food convenient in the plainest porringer, the simplest truth: God is good—God is holy—God is here—God loves you—God hates falsehood, cruelty, the most familiar lesson of kindness, reverence, civility any day may give occasion for it, and the text is never far to seek. But do not forget that in life's soft and susceptible outset, quite as important as great truths is gracious influence. There are teachers who drive dogmas into the heads of little children, yes, and of grown people even, in the same way as Jael drove the nail into the head of Sisera, and with much the same result; but the doctrines of God's holy Word are not so many spikes to be hammered into reluctant or unwary heads, but they are seeds to be planted in an honest soil, hidden in the willing heart, and in order that they may spring, they need, what God's own Spirit alone can give sufficiently, the quickening warmth, the softening rain. But in a degree subordinate the same gracious influence is exerted by the truly spiritual. You who are a Christian parent, you who

are a teacher of babes—nurse, foster-mother, grandmother Lois—whosoever you be who have to do with the little ones, perhaps I should say, most chiefly you so little thanked, but oh! how thankworthy—the Marthas and Marys, the Annas and Phœbes, who, free from other bonds, are the handmaids of the Lord and the servants of the whole church, and who with gifts and affections which might have brightened homes of your own, are now doing all that unselfish goodness and gentle ministry can do to brighten others,—imitate Jesus. Get into sympathy with Him. Seek His presence, seek His help. And walking through the world in His company, you will be a balm in the bleakest weather, a benediction in the wildest scene. Even demons which resist long fasting and prayers at the name of Jesus "fear and fly;" and that dear Name as sung by infant voices will to yourselves grow dearer, as the hope is awakened that your voices and theirs may yet unite in the Song of Moses and the Lamb. As in the Master's spirit you take into your arms the little ones, His own everlasting arms will encircle them and you; as on the little heart sobbing for its own offence, or for the unkindness of others, you lay your hand and still its tumult, a resistless voice will say within, "Peace, be still," and as you tell of that "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," He will pity both their and your simplicity, and as in unseen presence He comes again, His blessing will breathe upon you.

SERMON XXXVIII.

PIETY AT HOME.

"But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God."—1 Tim. v. 4.

The Home came from Heaven. Modelled on the Father's House and the many mansions, and meant the one to be a training place for the other, the Home is one of the gifts of the Lord Jesus—a special creation of Christianity.

This is a truth to which few are sufficiently alive. When we recall ancient history or read books in the dead languages, we are apt to deceive ourselves by throwing backwards our modern words and ideas. But neither the Greek nor Roman had a home. He had a house, and he might have a family, but that peculiar institution or upgrowth, which has given a new meaning to an old Teutonic term, is a product of the Gospel. It is true that the kindly word frequently occurs in the English Bible, but the equivalent is found in neither Greek nor Hebrew Testament. It was Jesus Christ who revealed the Father, and who threw into the filial relation an intensity, a force of affection, such as you might expect where the outlet is on earth but the fountain in Heaven. It was Jesus

Christ who, resolving all piety, all virtue into love,—"Love the Lord with all thy heart; love thy neighbour as thyself,"—at once emancipated religion and enlarged the domestic charities. It was Jesus Christ who, showing the sweetness of sacrifice, the sacredness of that love which is baptized in sorrow, showed the endearing influence of trials borne together, and taught men to love their wives even as He had loved the Church, and given Himself for it. And it was Jesus Christ who, ever pointing to joys which do not perish in the using, wedded duty to delight, and re-opening to the Christian family a better Paradise—the Father's House—placed the earthly home in the vestibule of Heaven.

Yes, my dear friends, we forget how many of our familiar joys we owe to Him to whom we also owe the great salvation. The masters in Israel take too many things for granted, and leave out a great deal which would be profitable for doctrine, reproof, and instruction in righteousness. We have a thousand Histories of the Christian Church:—where have we a History of the Christian Home? We have many tons of learning devoted to questions of Church-government:—how much to the domestic constitution, the right ordering of that fundamental society, the mismanagement of which causes most of the failures in Church and State? And yet it cannot be proclaimed too loudly—it is a truth for the present time—whatever enters into your largest and most loving thought when you think of Home is the gift of Christianity. It is to Jesus Christ we owe the truth, the tenderness, the purity, the warm affection, the

holy aspiration, which go together in that endearing word; for it is He who has made obedience so beautiful and affection so holy; it is He who has brought the Father's House so near, and who has taught us that love is of God; it is He who, inspiring the gentle affections, whilst the heartless heathen leave their parents to perish, has taught Christian children and nephews to show piety at home; it is He who, whilst the Roman claimed over son and daughter the stern prerogative of death, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children alongside of parents who have sought and obtained for their offspring life, even life for ever and ever, darkens the deed of Cato into a dire mistake; and it is He, when the Greek had his goddess, the Roman had his heroine, the wealthy Moslem still has his plaything, the sturdy savage has his slave, but it was Jesus Christ, who, through the saintliness of woman added to the nobleness of man, and in the wives and daughters of modern Christendom, restoring the helpmeet which Adam lost, restored to life its angel.

Whether in principle or practice, it is a long while before a thing so good and true as the Gospel makes progress in a world like this. Perhaps it is partly the fault of its ministers. Rising in Lebanon, the Abana flows southward. It is a large strenuous river brimming with molten snow, and strong enough (were it needful) to set many a mill in motion; but it is not till it has gushed through a mighty gorge in the mountains that it suddenly becomes a benefaction. Two miles northward of Damascus it issues on the plain, and gradually split off into separate channels, as many as eight or ten lades or races are drawn

from the ancient river. Each race, in its turn, is split up into numbers more, and, led on through farms and orchards over a circle of thirty miles, there rises up in the midst of the barren wild a garden of God. Like the Abana, or Barady, as they call it now, the Gospel leaps into our world straight from the heart of Heaven, and those who come right up to the margin find verdure there, and as they drink the living water and learn that God is love, they rejoice with a joy unspeakable. Like cold water to a thirsty soul, to some of you have come the good news from the far country, and melted by God's mercy, you have been filled with peace in believing, and have learned to love your Father in Heaven. But the Gospel, an infinite fulness, is able to do much more than that. It should be your effort, and in the effort you should be helped by Christ's ministers, to draw off and turn on to the root of each affection and feeling its health-giving torrent, so that your whole nature may be evangelized—your entire body, soul, and spirit sanctified. And when in your turn you become the minister, the teacher, or the visitor, just as the careful husbandman cuts a channel by which a tiny rill from the Abana may reach the root of his apricot or orange—and thus the crimson velvet or golden apple is fed with the stream from Lebanon,—so is it the business of the teacher to bring the blessed Gospel right up to daily life in the numberless details of its manifold departments. Turn it on the conscience, so as to keep it clean, its speckless brightness giving a good answer toward God; turn it on the temper, so that like the inner court which the jetting spray keeps cool in the

sultry weather amidst daily drudgery, the spirit may perceive the freshness of the firmament; turn it on the actual relations of life, so that the devout worshipper may be the conscientious worker, so that when chapels and cathedrals are closed, there may still be a church in the house, and so that the devotee who has shown piety in the great congregation or the public meeting may still show piety at home.

When Jesus Christ was dying, His eye rested on two familiar forms, one a dear disciple, the other His dearest mother. This last was most likely a widow, and the loneliness of her remaining life touched His thoughts as He said, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!" thus leaving a precious trust to the one, and providing a secure asylum for the other.

So says St. Peter, "If any widow have children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show right feeling or 'piety' at home, and to requite their parents: for this is good and acceptable before God." And just as it is a shocking hardness of heart, and often a horrible hypocrisy, when a man says to his father or mother, "It is corban,"—It is bespoken, or dedicated, the money which might otherwise have helped you; it is required for fine clothes, or an excursion, or I have set it down as a subscription,—as such blasphemers of the fifth command leave a blackness on their own memory which no services can wash out, no talents can tinsel over, so it is delightful to think of the efforts daily made by the nobler natures to requite their parents, and make less fortunate kindred sharers in their own prosperity. In highest

honour do we hold that servant who has no greater pleasure in her earnings than to set aside a pound or two to lighten the load on the bent shoulders of an aged sire, or to add to the comfort of a mother old and weary. It showed a sterling man, and was a good promise for the future, when Walter Scott spent his first five-guinea fee on a keepsake to his mother; and among the manly traits of Cromwell must we ever count it that, sharing as far as she could share his elevation, his homely mother had assigned her all respect and honour among high-born ladies and foreign ministers at Whitehall. This piety at home, this requiting of parents is good and acceptable to God. That thy days may be long, that thy life may be happy in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, honour thy father and mother.

This suggests the reciprocal duty. Those parents who in old age or widowhood would have comfort in their children must foster in them piety betimes.

1. The home must be safe. It must be a sanctuary, where there is nothing to hurt or destroy. Your resolution must be the Psalmist's, "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." It is a great and life-long benefit when life's outset is passed in an atmosphere of truth and openness, and nothing is more disastrous than that system of false threatening and coercion which makes its little victims both incredulous and superstitious, both cowardly and cunning. Be your-

self fair, candid, evenly-minded, making it easy to others to tell the truth, listening to both sides of the story, and careful to judge righteous judgment. And keep out all that has the opposite tendency. Whether as the servants who abide or the acquaintances who visit, let your eyes be on the excellent of the land, and the immoral and irreverent exclude as you would exclude contagion. And although life should not be all regulation any more than a park should all be paling, yet like the fence which surrounds the little tree, like the hoops which hold the staves together, good rules create good habits: the regular hours, the family prayer, the timely return at night, the collective upgoing to the house of God.

2. Make it attractive. The Australian bower-bird has its playing-place, a curious tunnel of twig adorned with shells and pebbles and glittering potsherds, through which it has unwearied delight with its companions in whisking to and fro. And man himself is a bower-bird. Merry movement, gay music, bright objects,—every child has the love of them, every home should be full of them. He is the good God who gives the gaiety, and he would be a gloomy demon who would drive it away. Pictures and playthings in the nursery, merry romps or funny stories on the winter nights, a trip to the fields and the villages in the tempting summer-time, all that can endear the spot, or make its memory music.

"How calm, how blest this tranquil hour
Of household evening joy!
The world shut out with all its power
To trouble or annoy;

The world shut out, and love shut in,
With youth and gentle mirth,
Which ever make their pleasant din,
Best by the household hearth.

The duties of the day are done,
Its toil and burden o'er.
To claim, until the rising sun,
Our anxious hearts no more.

Then let us rest amid the gifts
God's tenderness hath given,
And bless each blessing as it lifts
Our grateful hearts to heaven."—MONSELL.

3. Make it instructive. In order to become proficient in any department, classes must be attended, and courses of lessons gone through; and without a great deal of hard work and steady application there is no satisfactory scholarship. It is only in a laboratory that a man can become a chemist; it is only by walking the wards of an hospital that he can master the healing art; it is only at college that he can become thoroughly at home in Greek and Roman literature. But then in every well-informed circle there are daily thrown off facts and ideas which go far to make up the fund of collective intelligence, and in its fresh and free atmosphere mind is kept healthy and wakeful: memory, imagination, and judgment are strengthened by gentle and agreeable exercise.

Let us not be misunderstood. Knowledge is not the one thing needful, and it would be a pity to serve up a dish of philology with every meal: when you take your children for a walk, you are not bound to be the peripatetic philosopher, every time a flower is gathered, discoursing on styles and stamens, and every time you meet

a dog or sheep, bound to repeat the "Règne Animal." By such a process you may create little prigs or pedants; but from that sort of cramming there seldom grow enlightened men or agreeable women. Be yourself intelligent. Have the feeling that God's own world is very beautiful, and man's history very wonderful, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"—the casual story, the amusing anecdote, the lesson not sought for but suggested by bird, or beast, or blossom, will be welcome as rain to thirsty ground; with its pleasant associations, the fact or observation thus imparted will become the nucleus of numbers more. Be yourself intelligent, and as the elm with its knobs and twigs helps up and holds aloft those vines, which but for its sturdy stature would have sprawled along the ground, and left their abortive berries in the mire, so to surrounding minds a kindly high-toned presence gives something they can grasp, and which keeps them from cleaving to the dust.

For want of this many young people grow up quite boorish, and others, better mannered, at least more modish, never rise above the region of gossip. But if the homestead of your thoughts be pure and elevated, if the outlook be wide and the outcome be kindly, you will accustom those around you to a fair, noble, generous way of thinking, and in habits of accurate observation and just reflection, you will lay the foundations of good taste and true refinement, and in knowledge well applied will furnish the elements of wisdom.

4. Make the home a preparation for life. In society we are to be the servants one of another, and a good deal of

hard work is wanted, and in doing that work there is need for sweetness and self-denial. Lazy as is our fallen humanity, God in His goodness supplies incentives to industry. Not only is there the stern taskmaster, hunger,—"If any man will not work, neither let him eat,"—but as a counterpoise to the natural indolence the Creator gives to almost every one some natural aptitude or liking; and where it is practicable, it is wise to take His hint, and to the turn of mind conform the calling. With his passion for ships it was wise to let Nelson go to sea, and with his rhetorical aspirations when Erskine resigned his cornet's commission, the army lost a very ordinary soldier in giving to the bar the best of pleaders. If it be the vocation—if the young Rothschild is allowed to be a banker, if the young Cooper be sent to study surgery, if the young Kirke White is taken from the stocking-loom and allowed to study the sweet singers of all time, the gratified instinct is itself a powerful incentive. But over and above there is no small delight in difficulties overcome, in duty discharged, in a piece of work turned out and well finished, especially if the satisfactory feeling of usefulness be superadded. Very proud is the little maid who is left to watch all alone beside the sleeping baby's cradle, and quite as proud the little secretary, who on a packet of envelopes fastens the postage labels, or with paper-cutter ploughs open the pages of a new-come volume. Still more complacent the young sempstress whose first achievement in needlework wins smiles and kisses, the young carpenter who repairs a sash line or a broken chair, and saves a shilling.

But whilst these natural predilections and helpful impulses will be turned to account by wise and observant parents in this work-a-day world, there is a great deal to be done which we would like to get off from doing; and so there is need that conscience should be cultivated. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord. Servants, be obedient to your masters, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Not only is there the work, but there is the way of doing it: cheerfully, pleasantly, at once, and with prompt compliance for the sake of the dear Saviour, who gives His strength to every one who asks, and awards the approval which men withhold.

5. It is only carrying out the same remark when we add,—Make home a preparation for Heaven, for the best preparation for the present life is that which prepares for a better. The only commodity which we can count on carrying through life, and which is likely to accompany us into the life beyond, is *character;* and by character we mean all those elements which enter into our moral and spiritual composition;—faith in God, reverence, submission to His will, love to Christ, a sweet and gracious disposition, practical beneficence, a readiness for praise and thanksgiving. Where such things are present and abounding, not only do you see in their possessor preparedness for the inheritance of saints in light, but you can promise him a safe and prosperous journey towards it. He may never be

the owner of an inch of soil, but whilst to the churl his broad acres bring forth thorns and thistles only, the meek shall eat and shall be satisfied; alike in cultivated plain and shaggy wilderness his cheerful countenance shall find a continual feast. And in that vale of Baca where burning rocks and blistered feet make other pilgrims weary, his loyal, thankful spirit will dig a well.

Incomparably the best possession is a gracious spirit, and by far the greatest kindness we can render one another is assistance in overcoming faults and acquiring virtues. It is not so easy: for some are very sensitive and impatient of advice; and some are very languid and hopeless of improvement. There is need of varying treatment, but the wise physician who heals himself, and who in prayer looks up to a higher Power, will see many cured of their plagues and infirmities.

The reflex benefit is not to be despised. To watch your own spirit; to be ready with the soft answer, which turneth away wrath; to wait on the invalid and never weary; to be yourself the invalid, yet neither fretful nor exacting; to minister to the mind diseased, pulling it out of the self-same slough many times a day; to carry in your own bosom some great care or sorrow, and yet rejoice with those that do rejoice; to break away from favourite pursuits in order to give to others pleasure;—to do all this is difficult, so difficult that it can only be long and systematically sustained in strength of God's giving; but just because so difficult, it is the discipline which God prescribes to thousands who have taken no vow, and wear no distinctive garb, but who, up the steps of social

life and domestic duty, are climbing to glory, honour, and immortality, and who, as they reach the landing, will find repayment in the children whom God hath given them.

A million of money may be spent on a palace, and yet it may not answer the purpose. Claudes and Turners may pour their sunshine from the walls, and yet if God keep back the light of His countenance there will be no gladness in the heart. Axminster carpets may cushion over the floor, and yet, in the torturing sandals of some besetting sin or guilty commitment, some iniquity of the heels, every step will be painful. And though the lofty halls float with fragrance, though the feast march to music, though the goblets be golden and the guests as obsequious as brilliant, if conscience sees a "Mene, Tekel" on the wall, or feels a fiery finger recording judgment on its fleshly tables, serpents will hiss through shouts of triumph, and make a bitter mock of all this pomp and pageantry. Vainly is the sparkling circlet placed on the brow of beauty, if the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit be not already there—vainly does grandeur go forth on its ovation, if there be only imperial ensigns on the panels, and evil passions ride within—vainly do the gates lift up their head to let the dazzling convoy pass, if a mind not right with God be the leader of the cavalcade: for poor are those plaudits which bring no echo from the heavens—empty the elation which contains no blessing from the Eternal.

Ah, my friends, ours is no righteous judgment who judge by the outward appearance, and till we remember that happiness consists not in what men *have,* but in

what they *are*, we shall always mistake. A million of money may furnish a palace, but it needs something else to furnish a home. You have seen the upbreak of a household. The father is dead. He was a common day-labourer, and now that a few days after the funeral the cart moves off with the flitting, you would not give much for the entire effects. Leaving out bedstead and table, the chest of drawers and the half-dozen chairs, a few shillings would purchase the rest; but if you could only get back what once they gave out, it would be worth your while to purchase the whole, for the whole is intense with human history. Even the implements of honest industry—the spade, the hedge-bill, the mattock—with which in sleet and slashing rain he dug and hewed the daily bread, hardly more glorious, and not so innocent, are the warrior's trophies; for though they did not add an inch to his country's territory, they yearly added to its fruitfulness and beauty. These weapons never made a wife a widow, nor sent a strong man on his journey a maimed and shattered sufferer, but many a time did they drive the wolf of famine from a decent door, and warm was the apparel, bright were the gifts which they purchased for its inmates. In that humble homestead there was no room for instruments of music, grand or semi-grand, but there is the flute which warbled so wonderfully when the apple-tree blossomed, and the first balmy evening drew out the nightjar and began the true summer. Nor were there any stables or carriages to speak of; but there is the perambulator, not patent, with wicker frame and wooden wheels, in which the older ones took

out the weakly little one who could never learn to walk, and brought it back loaded with cowslips and broom, till the King came down into His garden and gathered the lily; and then Johnnie's little coach became a relic not to be played with, not to bring turf from the common or bundles for the laundry, but to stand in that corner where his cot would have stood, had not the Good Shepherd given him better sleep in a softer bed. Nor was there much of a library, but there was this beautiful bold-printed copy of the best of Books, on which he would read for hours together on the long Sabbath evening, and this Wesleyan Hymn-book beginning,—

> "O for a thousand tongues to sing
> My great Redeemer's praise;"

and a Book of Martyrs and a bundle of Repository Tracts whose pictures were food convenient for the children. And now from a home which nobody envied, but which was the habitual abode of sober happiness, only now and then interrupted by sanctified sorrow, they go forth scarce knowing whither, but content that God knows; perplexed with no probate, grumbling at no legacy-duty, but rich in contentment and sterling honesty, rich in frugal habits and in minds made up for hard work. And although that same cottage will never again collect them, life has there had a bright and wholesome beginning; and if they carry with them its influences, its precepts, its example, they have a Father who will never forsake them, and an inheritance compared with which the largest entail may be only a specious poverty, hoarded thousands vanity and vexation of spirit.

Finally, keep the home near Heaven. Let it face towards the Father's house. Not only let the day begin and end with God, with mercies acknowledged and forgivenesses sought, but let it be seen and felt that God is your chiefest joy, His will in all you do the absolute and sufficient reason. Life is a passover which must be eaten with bitter herbs, and if you have faith in God He will never be nearer than when grief is near; nor is ought so assuring, so hallowing as the comfort His presence imparts in the moment of panic, in the long days of sickness, in the dark days of sorrow; and the saintliest characters, the sweetest, meekest spirits are those who have had some signal experience of the Saviour's sympathy, just as those who keep our living age from dropping into utter secularity are the men who have passed through a great tribulation, or whose hearts are moored to the better country by forerunners within the veil.

SERMON XXXIX.[1]

FRUITS OF THE TREE OF LIFE.

'In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."—REV. XXII. 2.

MAN is made up of many faculties, and is capable of many feelings. To make him absolutely happy he would need a comprehensive counterpart to all these faculties and feelings, an object on which all his powers could exert themselves, and in which all his desires and emotions could find their fruition. But as these faculties soon weary if the same thought or the same truth be long presented to them; and as these desires and feelings are soon contented, if there be no improvement or no variety in the person or thing on which they fasten, it would need to be an infinite object which could for ever fill man's intellect without monotony or tedium, and fill man's heart with satiety. Were man mere intellect, an infinite truth might suffice and might fill with its calm plenitude his everlasting contemplations; but as even beyond intellect most men are made up of emotion and activity,

[1] This sermon was preached by Dr. Hamilton on the evening of May 26, 1867, the last occasion on which he occupied his pulpit. It was preached for the first time on May 9, 1847.

and these can only find their final centre in a living person, it needs not only a living but an Infinite Person to enchain in everlasting love and exercise with ever-varying delight *all* the heart and strength and mind and soul of man. In the living God alone can the creature find its all-sufficiency. In the Creator discovered and reconciled, in Jehovah enthroned as a Sovereign and accepted as a portion, the problem of highest happiness is solved, and from the moment that the enraptured spirit cries, "Whom have I in the heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth whom I desire besides Thee," the drifting planet, the wandering star begins to swing round in an orbit of light and joy, the pitcher which used to be filmed with a few drops of nightly dew, only to dry in the morning beam,—that pitcher is plunged in life's fountain, and is filled with all the fulness of God. The intellect expands, the soul is glad, and the life rises to its most blissful level, from the happy day that you enter into a personal relation to the all-sufficient Jehovah, and realize in its full significancy "God is Love."

In His amazing compassion and grace the blessed God is not only willing to pardon us sinners, and receive us into His favour, but He is willing to become the Portion of us worms, and be Himself our felicity. And in order the more effectually to carry out His munificent purpose, in order to make Himself accessible, His perfections palpable and attractive, and His presence assuring and encouraging, He sent His co-equal Son in the likeness of our feeble flesh. Into the Mediator's person, into the person of *our* Saviour, He conveyed all the wisdom, power,

and goodness of the invisible God. In Jesus dwells all the fulness of Godhead bodily, and in Jesus' flesh God is manifest. He who casts himself into the arms of Christ as his Redeemer, finds that in so doing he has flung himself into the bosom of his God; and he who really knows the mind of Jesus knows the mind of God. He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father. Or, conforming to the imagery of the text, as our mingled nature craves for what is visible and palpable, it hath pleased the Father that in the Incarnate Son should dwell all the supplies of pardon, righteousness, strength, and wisdom which sinners need.—all the *life* we lack, so Jesus is the Tree of Life. And as our feeble nature implores for what is attainable and easy, so all the blessings of salvation, all the sure mercies purchased by Christ's death, and all the sacred joys resident in Christ's person, are made as accessible as God's free gift, and as obvious as an urgent Gospel can make them. With its laden branches bending so low that the lazar can reach them from his couch as he rests under the shadow, and with its ripe fruits so ready that the touch of the little child can detach them, the Tree of Life grows in the midst of the street and on either side of the river, central, conspicuous, from all quarters approachable, and public property.

And more apposite still to what we said in the outset, we now call your attention to the variety and permanency of its productions.

At the foot of the Himalayas and Cordilleras there are some places where they obtain fruit all the year over. In their mild winter it ripens on the plain, and when the

fierce summer has scorched to ashes the lowland vegetation they bring down the berries plump and cool from beside the snow. But here is a wonder without its parallel in the gardens of our earth. Here is the self-same tree yielding appropriate fruit for each successive month, fruit for every season, fruit to cool the summer's fever and cheer the winter's frost. The truth is, the Tree of Life knows no seasons. High up among its branches spring warbles all the year; and they are only the poor pensioners underneath who count the months and tell an autumn and a winter. And it is this which distinguishes Immanuel from every other friend and every other portion. Suppose that instead of the Tree of Life you pitch your tent under the Tree of Learning,—here amongst many sour and crabbed ones you may gather some apples fragrant and mellow, and the fruit may be sweet to your taste. But as the season advances the fruit grows wormed, and though the first flavour may in the mouth be as sweet as ever, the little books are no sooner eaten than they make the belly bitter. And if from the Tree of Knowledge you pass to the Tree of Affection, there may sound a mellifluous murmur from among the balmy sprays, and soft gales may whisper through the shade, and golden apples may drop around you as you loll luxuriously underneath, but anon you start, for sere and yellow the leaves flicker down, and there is a smell of death and winter in them as they fall, and ere long the rime is hoary on anthers bleak and bare. Nay, could you by some sorcery conjure the world itself into one Tree of Glory, were blasts of Fame to sweep the Eolic boughs and

scatter down a costly dust from ruby buds and blossomed diamonds, could you pluck from obsequious branches trophies and decorations and imperial crowns,—honour, wealth, and fame cannot heal a broken heart or lull an aching head, and after you had plucked and plucked again, oh how astonished you would be when death drove his axe to the root of the tree, and asked, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" But all unlike the fickle and fugacious joys of earth is that joy ever verdant and ever fruitful, is Jesus the tree of Joys. The tree of Learning may grow tasteless or bitter, the tree of Love may wither, the tree of Glory—the axe is at its root, but the tree which God has planted for the healing of the nations and the happiness of souls, there is no tedium of its sweetness and no palling of its pleasures, for it has twelve manner of fruits, there is no suspension of its munificence, no disappointment of its supplies, for it yields a new harvest every month, and there is no risk of its decay, no winter in its history, no axe at its root, no worm at its core, for in its abundant vitality and ever-during growth, as well as in its power of quickening others, it may well be styled "The Tree of Life."

Having devoted last Sabbath to the healing leaves, we shall this morning consider some of the happy fruits. If then, my dear friends, you have allowed a leaf from the Tree of Life to fall on your wounded, plague-struck, dying souls, if you have found pardon in the Son of God, I may mention a few of the things which you will find in further acquaintance with Him.

1. An endeared command. To a worldly man the commands of God are not fruits but thorns. In quest of his sinful pleasures they wound his fingers, and then he sometimes flies into a rage, and kicks against the pricks, and wounds himself more deeply. Take for instance the law of the Sabbath. This commandment is holy, just, and good, but it comes in the worldling's way. He is anxious to accomplish a journey or finish off an important undertaking, and he pounces on the Sabbath. He appropriates God's hallowed day to his own secular uses. Conscience checks him. The commandment pricks him. He kicks against the pricks. He begins to cavil at the law, and question whether it now be binding. But just as some naturalists allege that thorns are abortive buds, and that if their progress had not been checked they would have developed in flowers or fruits,—on the Tree of Life are found no pricks or thorns. All its precepts are full-blown flowers or pleasant fruits. Whatever he gets from his Saviour the believer is glad to get, and whatever he is bidden he finds it easy to do. And so this command of the Sabbath he finds for its kernel, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God," and as a sweet flavour of Pentecost and Patmos,—"The Lord is risen," and "Lo, I come quickly," as the memory of a risen and returning Saviour runs through it, the Lord's day becomes dear to the regenerate taste. The Christ-loving disciple calls it "the holy of the Lord, and honourable," and the benignant associations it brings render hours once so wearisome a perfect delight. Or take one of those commands which reach the thoughts and intents

of the heart, one of those manifold precepts which make the thought of wickedness sin. Once on a time he grudged this law. He was angry at its constant haunting. When he had persevered for days in punctilious decorum, when he had been guarding every movement and watching the door of his lips, and on the whole successfully, to be brought sharply up on the saying, "Thou shalt not covet," "Blessed are the pure in heart," "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" "The thought of wickedness is sin"—to have his self-complacency thus damped, and his proud hopes thus damaged, is anger and exasperation. Instead of leading him to self-condemnation and self-despair, it often hurries him into open and reckless sin. "There is no hope." He charges God as a hard taskmaster, and abandons in vexation all attempts to please Him. The believer in Jesus finds in his Bible the same commands. To him the Word of God is as quick and powerful, and the requirement of "truth in the inward parts" is to him as strict and searching. But he does not deprecate nor evade it. His more tender conscience tells him, "In me dwelleth no good thing," but yet he loves the commandment which insists on holiness of heart and purity of thought. To him that precept is a privilege. His new nature hungers after righteousness. He longs to see not the mere outside of the tabernacle trimmed and whitened, but all within bright, orderly, and open—what the temple of the Holy Ghost should be; and to him that precept is a promise. He who hath begun the good work will end it, and in due time make him so pure in heart that he shall see God

And instead of frowning back on a frowning law, in connexion with Christ Jesus he is enabled to hail it as a beatitude and boon. Entire conformity to Christ is the only limit within which his sanctified longings can stop short, and gloriousness within is that luxury of highest health which he is content to die if so be he may taste it. And thus the precept which to the legalist was only a brier and pricking thorn, when gathered from the Tree of Life is all benignity and beauty, a privilege fraught with a Saviour's love and a promise fragrant with "good things to come."

2. There is another fruit which grows upon the Tree, and it is one of those that ripen in the winter months. This fruit is not so pleasant at the first. It has a sharp and pungent flavour, but those who have courage to use it abundantly find that it has a wonderful effect on the constitution. It gives such tone and tension to the system, that after some trial of it the faltering step grows firm, the crouching gait erect, irksome labour grows easy, and the heavy burden light. Though not popular with those who frequent the tree, no fruit is more plentiful on it, and, though not in much request at present, it was highly valued in primitive times. This invigorating and tonic fruit is *Self-denial.* "If any one will be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and deny himself, and follow me." It was a grace in which the Lord Jesus daily abounded. Indeed, His whole life was something deeper than even self-denial. It was self-emptying, and the Christlike disciple will be as His Lord. But what is self-denial? Is it sackcloth on the loins? Is it a wooden block for a

pillow? Is it pulse or lentil pottage for the daily meal? Is it a crypt or a kennel for one's lodging? It is this:—When provocation comes, and the temper is up, to rule the spirit—when the one cheek is smitten, to turn the other—when the ruffian knocks out the two teeth, to tell him, as one did, "Friend, if it will save thy soul, thou mayst knock out two more." It is when the flesh is weary, but the work not done, to keep at it still, and when fellow-labourers drop away and lookers-on are few, to ply it all the same; it is when you might tell your own exploits to let another praise thee, and not thine own lips, and when a fancy touch would make a good story a great deal better, to let the yea be "yea;" it is to take pains with dull children, and with ignorant and insipid adults, and to bestow kindness where you get no credit; it is to prefer the routine of duty to romantic novelties, and plod on in one's common work when paths of allurement open on every side; it is to save off one's person, to save off the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, to relieve the sufferings of humanity and help the cause of God; it is to resemble the blessed Jesus, whose meat and drink was the Father's will, and for whom the world had no enticement so long as He had a work to do; it is to be so filled with the love of Jesus, and so taken up with following Him, as to forget that the road is rough and the cross is weighty.

"O could we learn that sacrifice.
What lights would all around us rise!
How could our hearts with wisdom talk,
Along life's dullest, dreariest walk!

We need not bid for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky.

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask:
Room to *deny ourselves*—a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

3. Just as this last fruit has a remarkable effect in giving a manly port and athletic robustness to the piety—as it leads its possessor to prefer principle to pleasure, and duty to convenience—as it enables him frankly to surrender his own ease and advantage, and halts him in the lower room more gracefully than the self-seekers scramble into the highest seat, so there is a third fruit which has a singular tendency to give him who uses it a clear discernment and penetrating vision. To those who are inclined to employ Him for that purpose, Christ is made *Wisdom*, and, like that fabled fruit which put new edge on the eyesight, there are fruits on this Tree of Life which give marvellous reach and insight to the mental vision. For instance, we find some at the present day perplexed regarding doctrine. Many men, many minds, and so much that is plausible is urged on either side that plain people scarce know what to say. A hundred years ago there was a conscientious rector down in Lincolnshire. His mind was impressed. He was anxious for a more definite and soul-contenting religion than he yet had found. He sought it in Law's *Serious Call*, and in Grotius' *Commentary*, and in a more strict and careful life, but he seemed never coming nearer it. At last he prayed to God for Jesus'

sake to pity his distress, and guide him by the Holy Spirit into the understanding of His own truth. When he rose from this supplication he took the New Testament and read the first six chapters to Romans, earnest to be taught of God, and resolving to receive, like a little child, His revelation. He was amazed to find his difficulties melting as he read; it was all so clear and plain. In order to win God's favour he had wished to make himself something better than a common sinner, but now he saw that man is always a sinner, but that this sinner believing in Jesus has peace with God. He rejoiced with exceeding joy; he found peace and comfort springing up in his spirit; his conscience was purged from guilt through the atoning blood of Christ, and his lightened heart had liberty to run the way of God's commands. And the experience of Thomas Adam might be the experience of you all. If perplexed by conflicting doctrine, as for many years he was, the prompt and decisive extrication is light from the oracle; and if distracted by the friends who drag one way, and the great mass who drag another way, your wisdom is to put your hand lax and ductile into the hand of the Wonderful Counsellor, and follow wherever Scripture and His Spirit lead. And if the perplexity be practical—if it be regarding your Christian walk or the conduct of life that you are dark and uncertain, the same oracular light which irradiates the field of doctrine will shed conclusive clearness on the path of duty. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. And I will walk at

liberty; for I seek thy precepts." Whosoever is really earnest for Divine direction, more anxious to know what the Lord would have him do than to know what is for his own present ease or worldly interest, and who confides the case to Him who gives wisdom liberally and upbraideth not, may count on it very confidently that the Lord will send forth His light. Conclusive texts or converging providences will answer, "This is the way—walk in it."

4. Another of these perennial fruits is a Sanctified Mercy. The worldling's joys are not honestly come by. He did not find them by the bank of the River. They did not grow on the Tree of the New Covenant. They are pilfered, stolen; and like the robber who skulks away to his den with his plunder, the worldling fills his house with substance—but as no blessing was asked, and no thanks were given, he has no security and less satisfaction in his doubtful gain. He is hardly sure that he has any right to it, or that God designed it for him. But like that Christmas-tree in Germany on which parents suspend the gifts and love-tokens with which they mean to surprise their children—the believer's mercies grow on the Tree of Life. His heavenly Father sends them—his Saviour conveys them—his own name is in his Father's hand inscribed on them, and with a heart full of love and filial tenderness he takes them down and embraces them, and hangs them on the Tree again. Dear brethren, whatsoever ye do, whether in word or deed, do all—and whatsoever ye get, whether great or little, accept all,—"in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

5. A fifth fruit is Communion with God. This fruit is the very essence of the Tree. In Jesus it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; and whosoever tastes Christ's love, tastes and sees that God is good. Whatever Jesus is, the glorious Godhead is, and to have fellowship with the Son is to have fellowship with the Father. To know the love of Christ is to be filled with all the fulness of God. To have joyful assurance of God's love and transporting views of Immanuel's glory is the feast of fat things. When vouchsafed, it is the new nature's holiday. It is the summer of the soul, when under the shadow of a Saviour loved and nigh it sat down with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to its taste, when He brought it to the banqueting-house, and His banner over it was love—such a day as perhaps some of you enjoyed last Sabbath, if you saw that Jesus is a Saviour full of pardon and full of pity—if some "healing leaf," some Gospel text, fell gently on you, and looking up to the Tree of Life you saw the laden branches bending down, and stretched forth your hand to gather.

6. But not to enumerate the growth of successive seasons, I will just notice last the one that is gathered last. The tree yielded her fruit every month, and this fruit usually appears when the days are short and the year is closing. When the German Emperor wooed his bride, he used to send a golden rose to the princess of his choice, and when it came it was like an announcement that he himself would soon come to fetch her to the Imperial palace. After its arrival the next thing would be himself. And so on this lower ground it sometimes so happens. Dropped from the Tree of Life, a golden blossom or a golden fruit

falls into the bosom of some poor pilgrim beneath the Tree. His heart is suddenly on fire. It begins to indite good matter—"Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; God hath blessed thee for ever." He muses on this Excellent One, till he begins to forget his father's house and his own people. "I am bidding farewell to this poor world. I shall soon be taken from this dunghill, and set with the princes of His people in the holy place. God is now teaching me to dwell in Himself, and to wrap myself up in His infinite excellency. He is pulling me out of myself, and out of created vanities and dreams. His desire is towards me, His love is at work with me." And by this love-token, this influx of heavenly-mindedness, the soul is made joyfully willing to go. Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? No, they don't tarry. Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! even so, the Lord Jesus is come, and the ready soul is safe in His omnipotent arms.

"It shall be brought with gladness great
And mirth on every side,
Into the palace of the King,
And there it shall abide."

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

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